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

COVER STORY

BIG RESPITE **FOR POWER CONSUMERS IN J&K AS GOI** **ALLOCATES AN ADDITIONAL** **293 MW OF POWER** **TO MEET WINTER DEMAND**

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World Bank-funded Sidhra-Surinsar Road upgrade project sparks economic boom, boosts tourism in Jammu and Kashmir

'Rs 16.70 Cr road project executed by JKERA vital as it provides road connectivity to various pilgrimage, tourist destinations'

SURINSAR (JAMMU): The Sidhra-Surinsar road upgrade project, funded by the World Bank, has not only enhanced the picturesque region but also sparked joy, prosperity, and a surge in tourism. Commuters and tourists alike are expressing their satisfaction with the much-needed improvements to the roadway.

A team led by Technical Assistance and Quality Audit Control (TAQAC) experts of the Jhelum Tawi Flood Recovery Project (JTFRP) carried out a detailed survey to assess commuter satisfaction with the roadway to spot "pain and delight areas" and to identify areas where service improvement was required. However, the majority of the people in the areas have expressed satisfaction with their overall experience.

Locals expressed their satisfaction, saying despite several bottlenecks the project was completed as people of the area have started to reap the benefits in abundance.

Rashmi Choudhary, a school teacher in the Surinsar area, said that there were many bottlenecks which have been cleared by the concerned departments and many promising developmental projects have been taken up. She said that the World Bank-funded Jhelum Tawi Flood Recovery Project has been able to complete the much-awaited road project from Sidra to Surinsar, which has not only benefited the locals but also generated a huge tourism potential for the locals.

Previously, she said, there were obstacles, hindering the fair allocation of the project. Grateful for the government's shift towards rural areas, she added.

An elderly man, Thodu Ram of Aithem village in the Surinsar area, said



that it was so pleasing to see beautiful roads connecting their villages to the city nerve centre.

"This has eased our life. This has employed scores of our men in the village. They take public transport from their village, go to the city and come back in the evening," joyous Ram said.

Notably, in what could be seen as a major achievement by the current dispensation led by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

The World Bank has maintained that its Rs 1500 crore project in J&K has largely achieved its objective and, in some cases, surpassed the agreed targets. The Rs 1500 crore project funded by the World Bank was a non-starter earlier, but the completion of the project saw the light of day when Dr Syed Abid Rashid Shah took the reins.

Pertinently, Lieutenant Governor, Jammu and Kashmir, Manoj Sinha, had inaugurated Rs 16.70 Cr. Sidhra- Surinsar road upgradation project completed

by the Jammu and Kashmir Economic Reconstruction Agency (JKERA).

The LG in his speech on the day of inauguration lauded the executing agency and the role of officials, saying that the Rs 16.70 Cr road project executed by JKERA was very vital as it provides road connectivity to the various pilgrimage and tourist destinations in and around the Jammu district.

Chief Executive Officer, JKERA, who is also Secretary Tourism, Dr Syed Abid Rashid Shah, said that the vital road project will facilitate the socio-economic development of areas including Bajalta, ChakChilah, Badgah, Aithem and Surinsar, benefitting around five lakh souls in the region.

"The road will give a boost to the tourism sector in Jammu and adjoining areas as it completes the pilgrimage, tourist circuit from Pumandal. Mansar, Devkand, connecting with Shri Mata Vaishno Devi shrine and Sudhmahadev in Reasi and Udhampur district," he said.



J&K stands tall among states/UTs of the country having organized a record of 1.74 lakh events under the Meri Maati, MeraDesh Program with a public participation level of over 80% (of the total population), which is highest ratio for participation of people in any State or UT...

J&K attains feat in JJM, crosses 75% coverage of rural households

Ranks 3rd in Quality Monitoring at the National level

SRINAGAR: To achieve 100 per cent saturation of rural areas in tap water connectivity in J&K, 14.03 lakh (75%) out of 18.69 lakh rural households have so far been covered under Tap Water Connections by the J&K Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM).

The Mission has been working overnight to achieve the targets and so far out of 6596 work components, more than 5600 components (85%) like Tube wells, Bore Wells, Rapid Sand Filtration Plants, Over Head Tanks, Ground Service Reservoirs and pipe networks have started with completion of 1376 works as on date.

Similarly, more than 3000 schemes are under execution across all the districts of the UT with the involvement of about 1700 contractors executing the works which has resulted in massive employment generation in rural areas. At least 350 Water Supply Schemes have been completed as on date.

Under Water Quality Monitoring & Surveillance, during the current fiscal, about 1.75 lakh tests have been conducted through 98 Water Testing laboratories set up all across the UT to ensure the constant maintenance of the quality of the water being supplied to the general

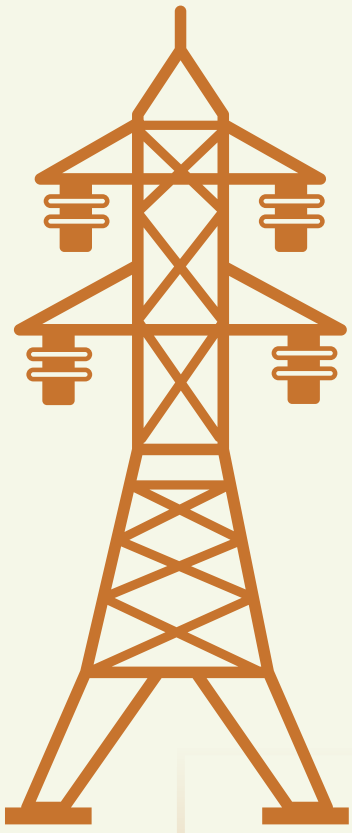
public.

Further, about 7500 Field Testing Kits (FTKs) have been distributed among 6630 Panchayat Pani Samitis and more than 33000 Women have been trained for the use of FTKs in checking the quality of water and reporting the results online through the WQMIS Portal.

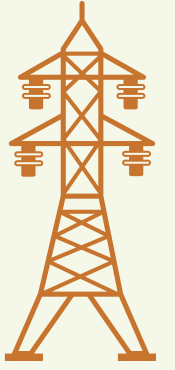
The Mission has conducted massive public outreach and awareness campaigns across J&K during this year which include capacity building sessions, debates, painting competitions at schools, holding of special Gram Sabhas, distribution of field kits etc.

JJM, it may be mentioned, is a flagship programme of national importance aimed at providing every rural household with a Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) within the premises, capable of supplying water at a minimum service level of 55 litres per capita per day and quality conforming to BIS 10500.

At an estimated cost of Rs 13000 crores, the programme involves the creation of a sustainable water infrastructure and building the capacities of the local communities and involving them in the management of the water supply assets on a long-term and sustainable basis.



Gurez Valley gets grid-connected electricity for the first time



BANDIPORA: In a groundbreaking and historical achievement, the Gurez Valley was Sunday successfully connected to the electricity grid, marking the first time the region has access to a reliable source of electricity.

The historic development was also announced by the Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, who expressed his joy and stated that this marks a momentous occasion in the history of the region.

The project involves around 180 kilometres of 150 mmsq conductor, 1950 ST Poles, and 4 km of underground cabling over vast stretches passing over Razdhan Pass situated at a height of 12672 ft above sea level having the most hostile weather conditions and tough terrain and topography. The successful test check underscores the commitment of the Government to reach out to the people of far-flung areas.

Dr. Owais Ahmad extended congratulations to the resilient people of Gurez Valley. He acknowledged their patience and perseverance throughout the process and expressed optimism about the positive impact that electricity will have on various facets of daily life, including education, healthcare, and economic activities.

Residents of Gurez expressed their overwhelming joy and gratitude to the Hon'ble LG, District Administration, and PDD for the successful completion of this project. They

further expressed that the dedicated power supply shall bring out manifold progress in tourism-related and other economic activities.

Dr. Owais informed that the district team, including the STD division, has worked hard to complete the work as per the strict timeline. He said that the 60 KM 33 KV transmission line had a successful trial on Sunday. He said that 1500 consumers will benefit in the first phase.

He further informed that the rest of the villages will be connected in a phased manner.

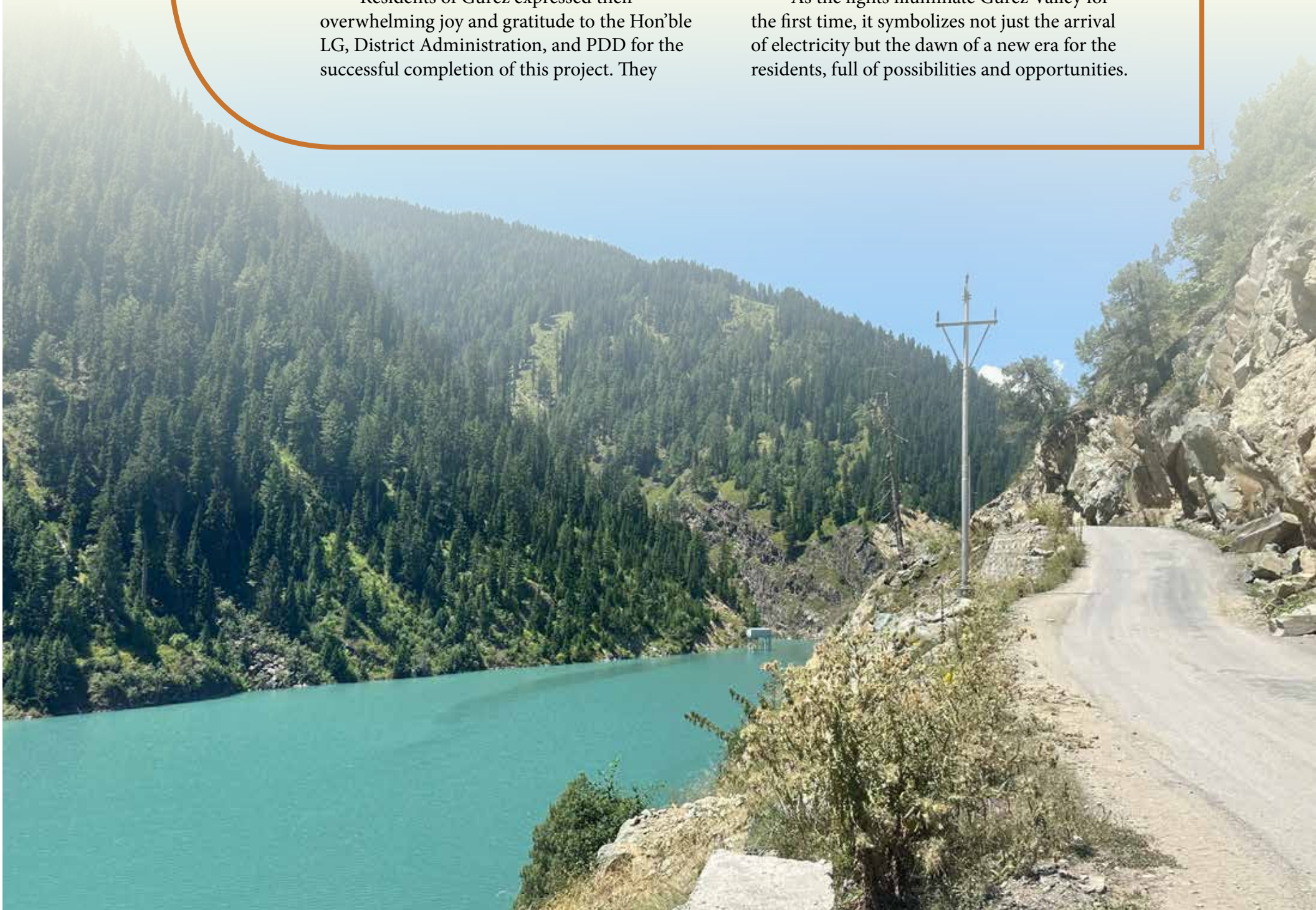
The DC said that for decades, the residents of Gurez Valley have faced challenges due to the absence of a consistent power supply. He said that the frontier sector relied on diesel generator sets for electricity.

Dr Owais said that Gurez now enjoys grid connectivity, the first time after independence with the successful charging of the 33KV line.

The DC applauded the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders, including PDD, and STD Ganderbal/Bandipora, involved in making this project a reality.

He emphasized that the electrification of Gurez Valley is not just about providing power but about empowering the local communities, fostering economic growth, and enhancing the overall quality of life.

As the lights illuminate Gurez Valley for the first time, it symbolizes not just the arrival of electricity but the dawn of a new era for the residents, full of possibilities and opportunities.



Big respite for power consumers in J&K as GoI allocates an additional 293 MW of power to meet winter demand

SRINAGAR: In yet another respite given to power consumers during peak winters, the Government of India (GoI) has increased power allocation to J&K by about 293 MW, by transferring power from distant powerhouses in West Bengal, Bihar and even Bhutan.

According to the spokesperson for the Jammu & Kashmir Power Development Department (JKPDD), in today's digital era, modern tools and software enable power transfer and management in an automated manner without requiring any human intervention, depending upon the demand, availability, and of course the network feasibility.

Regarding new power allocations made today by Govt. Of India to J&K, the spokesman said that Jammu & Kashmir, being primarily dependent on hydroelectric power, faces a significant fall in generation during winters due to low water levels in rivers and therefore, around 85% of power supply during winters is sourced from thermal plants to compensate for the deficit during winters.

The spokesman reiterated that the UT is making every effort to ensure sustainable and firm power availability throughout the year. In this direction, during the current financial year, the UT has entered into historic Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) for 1600 MW of Solar power, 900 MW from Hydro, and an additional 500 MW from thermal plants, currently in progress following the decision of the UT Administrative Council under the Shakti policy. This will not only lead towards resource adequacy for the region but will also provide an optimal mix of Hydro, Thermal, and Solar generation, while the efforts are underway to harness wind power as well so that the strength behind renewable energy is utilized to the maximum.

Addressing concerns raised in a recent news item published in one of the local news dailies

on November 30, 2023, highlighting a surge in interruptions in J&K, the spokesperson reiterated that a persistent issue contributing to these interruptions is the non-disclosure of actual electric load by consumers.

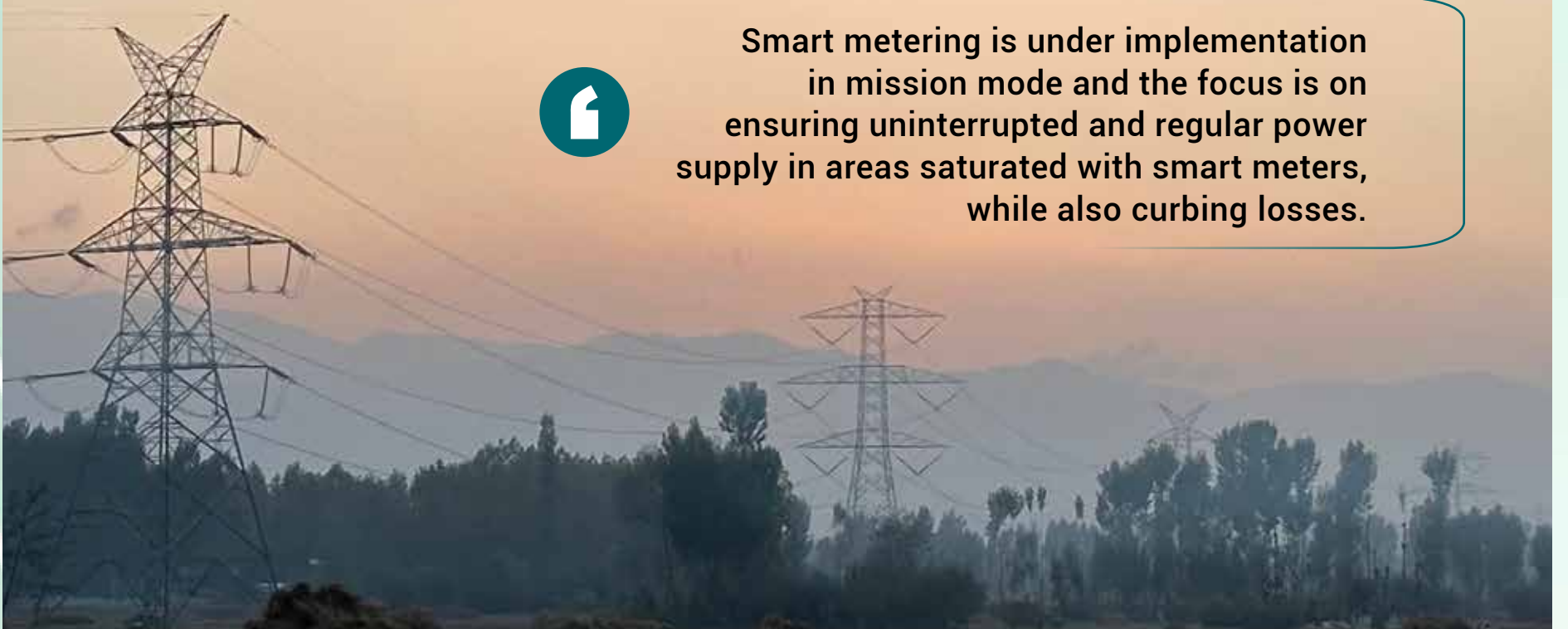
Regarding the hours of power supply to consumers, the spokesperson conveyed that smart metering is under implementation in mission mode and the focus is on ensuring uninterrupted and regular power supply in areas saturated with smart meters, while also curbing losses.

In areas without smart metering, the department is sustaining the same number of power supply hours as maintained during the previous year. Moreover, there is a curtailment schedule in effect which is diligently being published to prevent any inconvenience to the public. The spokesman further emphasized that contrary to the mention of Hammams in the news item, electricity remains the primary and preferred source for heating, with people using crude nichrome wires or non-thermostat-fitted heaters which remain operational throughout the day.

Recognizing the urgency, the spokesman emphasized on discontinuing the use of obsolete and environmentally unfriendly electric heating systems. The spokesman also mentioned that numerous crude heaters which have been banned by the department were recovered by the enforcement squads of KPDCL in the recently conducted inspection drives.

In addition to maintaining a reliable power supply amidst extreme weather conditions, the Power Development Department (PDD) is proactively engaged in eradicating instances of illegal hooking. In the last seven days, inspection teams of KPDCL have conducted 7585 inspections in different districts of the Kashmir region and imposed a fine of Rs.68 Lakhs on the defaulters.

Smart metering is under implementation in mission mode and the focus is on ensuring uninterrupted and regular power supply in areas saturated with smart meters, while also curbing losses.



J&K PDD withdraws 15% Electricity Duty, 'consumer bills unaffected despite revised tariff'

JAMMU: In a strategic move to alleviate the impact of a 15% tariff increase, the Jammu and Kashmir Power Development Department (PDD) has announced the withdrawal of Electricity Duty (ED) in its revised power tariff.

The decision, effective from 1st December 2023, comes following the issuance of a new Tariff Order by the Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC), Jammu & Kashmir.

The JERC, after thorough consideration and adherence to standard procedures, implemented a 15% tariff hike while maintaining fixed charges at their existing levels. Notably, the revised overall tariff rate remains below the actual procurement cost incurred by the corporations in supplying power to consumers.

To safeguard consumers from an increase in their electricity bills, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir has taken a proactive step by withdrawing the 15% Electricity Duty previously applied to energy charges in the existing tariff structure. This calculated decision ensures that the overall impact on consumers' electricity bills is nullified.

A sample calculation for a domestic consumer consuming 500 units per month reveals energy charges of Rs. 2185 (calculated at Rs. 3.80 per unit, plus 15% Electricity Duty), fixed charges of Rs. 40, resulting in a total electricity bill of Rs. 2225.

In comparison, the new tariff for 2023-24 sees an increase in energy charges to Rs. 2175 (calculated at Rs. 4.35 per unit), maintaining fixed charges at Rs. 40, resulting in a total electricity bill of Rs. 2215.

Notably, despite the 15% tariff increase, the withdrawal of the 15% Electricity Duty ensures no increase in the final electricity bill for consumers.

In a remarkable move towards enhancing power supply efficiency, the PDD has successfully implemented a series of reforms aimed at delivering improved and high-quality power supply to consumers at an affordable price.

A significant milestone in this reform journey is the restructuring of



the power department by unbundling the departmental structure into two Distribution Companies (DISCOMS) and a Transmission Corporation. This long-awaited reform aligns Jammu & Kashmir with other Indian States/UTs, ensuring consumer services are enhanced while ensuring the sustainability of the power sector.

To facilitate this restructuring, a substantial financial package of Rs. 5000 Crores was allocated for the comprehensive upgrade of infrastructure under various Central Sector Schemes. This investment aims to create adequate capacities in almost every district, providing regular and quality power supply to citizens.

To ensure that the newly formed corporations are provided with a clean balance sheet, all the outstanding dues on account of power purchase, accumulated to the tune of Rs. 30700 Crores over several years, were taken over by the Government and cleared by availing soft loans under GOI Schemes like Atmanirbhar Bharat and LPS Rules 2022. Accordingly, a conducive platform has been provided to the discoms to operate on sound business principles and deliver optimal services to consumers, thereby enhancing overall consumer satisfaction levels.

In the present system as well, the discoms continue to grapple with high losses attributed mainly to power theft, poor metering and low tariff rates, which are a major cause of concern not only for the department but also threaten the overall efficiency of the sector. The high Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses, reaching 44% in Jammu and

58% in Kashmir as compared to the national average of 16.44%, have left DISCOMS unable to meet power purchase expenses, leaving aside other critical expenditures like Operations & Maintenance (O&M) and capital investments, which still continue to be supported by Government.

To ensure the financial sustainability of the power sector, even GOI has launched schemes like the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) where conditional grants linked to the performance of discoms on certain pre-defined parameters have been provisioned.

The parameters which are required to maintain the proper fund flow under the schemes, the DISCOMS need to implement crucial measures such as adopting cost-reflective tariffs, reducing AT&C losses, reducing the ACS-ARR Gap and various other reforms to ensure the financial sustainability of the sector, thereby ensuring uninterrupted power supply in line with the evolving living standards of consumers. In today's modern era, as the entire country progresses towards a digital India with a focus on on-demand services, the power sector is no exception.

It is analogous to any other commodity we purchase from the market, where the consumer pays, and the seller provides. Fundamentally, consumers seek nothing more than uninterrupted power supply, whether they are urban or rural consumers. Additionally, every utility must meet the expectations and needs of the consumers it serves.



**4 new
industrial
estates to
come up in
3 districts
of J&K**

JAMMU: The Administrative Council (AC), which met under the chairmanship of the Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, accorded the administrative approval for the setting up of 4 new Industrial Estates in J&K.

Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to the Lieutenant Governor; Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary and Dr. Mandeep Kumar Bhandari, Principal Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor, attended the meeting.

These include Industrial estates at Budhi Kathua, Medicity Jammu, Chandgam & Lelhar Pulwama which shall be developed over 1379 Kanals of land with an investment of Rs 136.65 Crores. Apart from attracting investments, the projects shall provide a boost to local employment and are expected to generate over 11497 jobs

in the private sector.

The new Industrial estates shall be comprehensively developed in terms of infrastructure viz. internal road works, availability of electricity, Centralized Water Distribution System, rainwater harvesting, roadside greenery/plantation etc.

Besides, the development shall involve setting up of Centralized Effluent Treatment plants on new patterns as per the norms of the National Green Tribunal & other facilities on modern state of art technology. The timeline for completion of projects shall be 18 months.

The establishment of new industrial estates is in line with the commitment of the government to boost industrial development & entrepreneurship in J&K.

More than nine lakh tourists enjoy Gondola ride at Gulmarg this year

‘To cross a million mark by year-end’

SRINAGAR: More than nine lakh tourists have enjoyed the Gondola ride at Gulmarg this year and the figure is expected to cross more than the million mark by the end of this year. Tourists describe the experience as surreal and alluring.

Managed and operated by J&K Cable Car Corporation, the Gulmarg Gondola is the flagship attraction of Kashmir tourism. It is possibly India’s most popular ropeway, and at a height of 14,000 ft, it is Asia’s highest-operating cable car.

The Corporation, this year, improved and enhanced the service delivery by improving the ticket issuing mechanism, undertaking several safety tests and overhauling the second phase of the Gondola with the latest technology.

Managing Director of J&K Cable Car Corporation, Raja Yaqoob said the Corporation is sensitized to its role as a prominent stakeholder of J&K tourism. He said the corporation is committed to improving the tourist experience by giving them an easy, hassle-free and safe ride. He assured Tourists of even better facilities in the upcoming winter season and appealed to Tourists to



book tickets online mode only and adhere to the timings mentioned in the ticket to avoid any inconvenience.

It may be mentioned here that the Gulmarg Cable Car comprises two phases; one from Gulmarg Resort to Kongdori Valley and the second from Kongdori to Apharwath Peak. The ropeway has in total of 108 cabins and 18 towers.

The first stage transfers from the Gulmarg resort at 2,650 m (8,694 ft) to Kongdori Station in the bowl-shaped Kongdori Valley. The second stage of the ropeway takes to a height of 3,980 m (13,058 ft) on Kongdori Mountain, a shoulder of nearby Afarwat Peak (4,200 m (13,780 ft)).

J&K integrates all 17 functional mandis on eNAM, raises eNAM trade to over 300 cr this year



WDRA was constituted in 2010 under the Warehousing (Development and Regulation) Act, 2007 with a mission to regulate and ensure implementation of provisions of the Act for the development and regulation of warehouses, regulations of negotiability of warehouse receipts and promote orderly growth of warehousing business in the country.

SRINAGAR: The Department of Horticulture Planning and Marketing in collaboration with the Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA), today organized an outreach programme for Warehousing Registration and integration of CA stores with the eNAM portal at SKICC, Srinagar.

Chairman WDRA, T K Manoj Kumar was the chief guest on the occasion.

Kumar informed that WDRA was constituted in 2010 under the Warehousing (Development and Regulation) Act, 2007 with a mission to regulate and ensure implementation of provisions of the Act for the development and regulation of warehouses, regulations of negotiability of warehouse receipts and promote orderly growth of warehousing business in the country.

He explained the advantages of registration of warehouses and emphasized that the e-NWR issued by WDRA registered warehouse shall act as a prime tool of trade and loan. He also elaborated the process of generation of e-NWR which is a potent instrument for securing credit. He announced a waiver of the registration fee till 25th Oct 2025, besides emphasizing that PACS in J&K can take due benefit for registration from WDRA.

Sharing the perspective, Director Horticulture Planning and Marketing, Vikas Sharma, in his address, informed that the meeting was organized with the twin objective of raising awareness on registration of warehouses under the Warehousing (Development & Regulation) Act and bringing CA Stores in the fold of eNAM for giving maximum returns to the farmers for their produce.

National Agriculture Market (eNAM) is a pan-India electronic trading portal which networks the existing APMC mandis to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities. He shared that a

similar event was organized in August in Jammu.

It was informed on the occasion that J&K has now integrated all 17 functional mandis on eNAM. The Department is keen to facilitate registration of CA stores in J&K with WDRA, paving the way for their integration on the e-NAM Portal.

The Department has recently provided for the declaration of CA stores as sub-yards of Mandis for carrying out e-NAM Trade to facilitate the farmers to reap maximum returns for their produce. From only 89 lakh eNAM trade till 2021-22, J&K upscaled it to 32 crore last year and during this year, it has raised manifolds to over 300 crore.

H.K. Dabas, Under Secretary, WDRA and B.P. Yadav, AD, WDRA made presentations on the Warehousing Act/Rules and detailed the Registration Process, e-NWR, scientific storage practices, assaying procedures etc. The eNAM and SFAC teams made the participants aware of the procedure for the integration of warehouses and CA stores on eNAM and welcomed the initiative of the Horticulture (P&M) Department and WDRA in this regard.

The event was participated, among others by, G.R. Mir, Director Horticulture Kashmir, R.A.Wani, Special Secretary, Imam Din MD, JKHPMC, Khalid Majeed, Director I&C Kashmir, Mohammad Iqbal Choudhary, Director Agriculture Kashmir, CGM NABARD, Shahid Kamili, President, FCIK, Vicky Shah, Chairman, PHDCCI, representatives of KCCI, various stakeholders including officers of Horticulture (P&M) Department, DMI, NABARD, Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, FCI, Industries and Commerce, SIDCO, SICOP, Cooperatives, SKUAST, banks.

Besides, CA stores owners, owners of warehouses, farmers, and Presidents of major fruit Mandis also attended the event.

J&K Fisheries deptt ranks top among best-performing districts across country

PMMSY, HADP, FIDF envisages doubling trout production in next five years



AHMEDABAD (GUJARAT): Receiving high recognition and appreciation at the national level, the Department of Fisheries ranked top among the best-performing districts across all Union Territories of the Country for the vigorous development of fish and fisheries in Jammu and Kashmir.

Anantnag district, which has been privileged with this outstanding achievement, was presented with a trophy and a certificate of merit. The felicitation was conferred on the occasion of World Fisheries Day celebrated at the National level in Gujarat Science City, Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

The event was inaugurated and presided over by Purshotam Rupala, Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

The function was attended by the fisheries fraternity of National and International repute.

On the occasion, the Union Minister recognized and appreciated the efforts of the department for the development of Fisheries particularly Cold water in the UT of J&K. He emphasized that the Government of India has launched a number of schemes for the promotion of fish marketing, branding and export under PMMSY.

He exhorted upon the youth to take benefit of such schemes for the development of market linkage in the form of a cold chain to get remunerative prices for their produce.


Pertinently, the Kashmir region of J&K is the epicentre for the development of Cold water Fisheries

and under the leadership of Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha and the guidance of Principal Secretary, of the Agriculture Production Department, Shailendra Kumar various steps are being taken by the UT government for enhancing the productivity as well as income of Fishers. A special subsidy component has been kept for the UT to attract more farmers to adopt this profitable venture.

Director of Fisheries, Mohammad Farooq Dar, said that the focus of the department is to make farmers more resourceful through the implementation of various schemes for marketing of trout and also for export to other States.

Anantnag is at the forefront of Trout Production and a hub of Trout production among all the districts of the country. Besides, the district is traversed by different trout streams being angled by the esteemed anglers both local and foreign and thus an explicit boost to the ecotourism. Effective implementation of schemes like PMMSY, HADP, FIDF etc envisages the trout production to be doubled during the next five years creating gainful employment opportunities for educated unemployed youth.

World Fisheries Day 2023 was celebrated in all the districts of J&K and the main function was held at the Regional Fish Farmers Development Agency of Jammu Division and Kashmir Division. A large number of fishers participated in the event and witnessed live streaming of the World Fisheries Day event held at Gujarat Science City, Ahmedabad Gujarat.



The work on "Construction of Road from Jub Chitterkote to Takiya Durie up to Dabar Bhadarkote with a Project cost of 517.53 Lakhs has been approved under NABARD which will benefit the entire village especially Takiya, Durri and Dabar hamlets of Bhadarkote where most of the families are below the poverty line.



We have been suffering a lot. We have to carry our patients uphill up to Bahadurkote to access any kind of transport to SDH at Tangdar. Now, this road will lessen our travel time and efforts in a big way. The road project will also help students of these hamlets reach High School at Bahadurkote...



Several hamlets of Bhadarkote, Karnah to get road connectivity for the first time

KUPWARA: The people of Takiya, Durri and Dabar hamlets of (Bhadarkote) in the Karnah Sub Division of Kupwara on Monday started celebrating with joy after the road construction project was taken up for these hamlets for the first time.

As soon as the JCB machines started earth-cutting work for the road project, the people of the area started distributing sweets and welcomed officials with garlands.

This road project will first connect Takiya, the hamlet where recently a specially-abled girl was charred to death in a tragic fire incident.

After the approval of this much-needed road project, the demand for the resolution of a land dispute between the locals and timely execution of the road project was put forth by the residents during Block Diwas at Tangdar before the Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan who had directed SDM Karnah to bring all the stakeholders on board and get the dispute resolved and start the road project so that residents do not face problems.

Following the resolution of the land dispute by SDM Karnah, the residents offered land for the execution of the said road project without any compensation.

Locals of the area welcomed the administration's move and expressed their gratitude to Deputy Commissioner Kupwara and SDM Karnah for playing their important role in the execution of the project as it was a long pending demand.

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under NABARD which will benefit the entire village especially Takiya, Durri and Dabar hamlets of Bhadarkote where most of the families are below the poverty line.

The road project will benefit the people of Riyala, Murchana, Ib-kote pingala Haridal besides Bahadurkote as it would be the shortest route for the inhabitants of these villages to almost 80% of the villages and also to Tehsil headquarters at Tangdar.

"This is a dream come true for the people of the area who have suffered a lot of lack of road connectivity. In the absence of better road connectivity the situation used to get worse when there was any medical emergency or any other incident in the area," residents said.

While lauding the District Administration Kupwara and Sub Divisional Administration, locals said that this road project would herald a new dawn in our lives.

Highlighting the problem of not being able to reach the destination in case of emergency due to non-availability of road, a local of Takiya said, "We have been suffering a lot. We have to carry our patients uphill up to Bahadurkote to access any kind of transport to SDH at Tangdar. Now, this road will lessen our travel time and efforts in a big way. The road project will also help students of these hamlets reach High School at Bahadurkote."

However, the locals have appealed to the Tehsil and District Administration to ensure that this road project is completed as per the approved DPR, up to the last unconnected hamlet, Dabar, at the earliest.



JJM transforms lives in twin villages of Tulail Gurez

Kashpot & Kilshay receive tap water for the first time

BANDIPORA: In a significant move aimed at improving the quality of life for its residents, Kashpot and Kilshay villages of Tulail received piped water supply for the first time after 76 years of independence with the implementation of JJM schemes.

Kashpot and Kilshay villages lying near LoC in the Tulail area of Gurez till now were dependent on springs; residents had long grappled with a daily struggle, to access clean and safe drinking water. For generations, women and children trekked miles to the nearest water source, carrying heavy containers.

Their lives were defined by this relentless routine, leaving little time for education, livelihoods, or community development.

The turning point came when the administration recognized the urgent need to address this pressing issue. It marked the beginning of a remarkable transformation for the entire community of Kashpot and Kilshay twin villages.

The WSS Kashpot and Sudi Kilshay under JJM took shape with the laying of pipelines, connecting the villages to sources known for their clean water.

The estimated cost for Kashpot WSS under JJM was 55.47 lacs, and for Sudi Kilshay, the estimated cost was 58.88 lacs.

The Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Dr. Owais Ahmed said that such initiatives are part of government programs to increase access to clean and safe drinking water in rural areas through JJM.

He said that providing Kashpot and Kilshay villages with a tap water connection for the first time was a tough task due to their location on hills with high elevation but establishing a network of taps and distribution points within the village was necessary to make the water easily accessible to residents.

Dr. Owais said that despite the limited working season, and challenging and tough conditions in the difficult terrain of the Tulail area, the department and other stakeholders worked shoulder to shoulder to implement

JJM schemes successfully.

He said that the Sudi Kilshay scheme has been completed with 100 percent FHTC coverage, and WSS Kashpot will be completed before December this year.

Dr. Owais said access to a clean and reliable water supply is a cornerstone of community development, positively impacting health, education, livelihoods, and overall quality of life for the area and is a vital step towards empowering communities in the border area.

The residents of these twin villages celebrated the arrival of clean, potable water right in their homes with immeasurable joy on their faces.

The transformation of these villages, from a place marked by water scarcity to one where the simple turn of a tap brought life-changing opportunities, exemplifies the power of government support and schemes for the welfare of the general public.

Dr. Owais emphasized that fast-track developments in border areas of Gurez in recent times are a sign of good governance towards strengthening border regions and ensuring all the basic facilities to the residents.

He said that these projects can significantly improve the quality of life for the residents of the village by providing access to safe and convenient drinking water, reducing the burden of water collection, and promoting better sanitation practices.

Over the successful implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission, the locals expressed their gratitude to LG administration and Deputy Commissioner Bandipora for successfully executing the Jal Jeevan Mission projects in their area.

The locals said that earlier, it was a tough task for their women to trek miles and fetch water for daily use, and during winters, it was impossible to fetch water from distant places.

The locals also expressed happiness for the efforts of the Jal Shakti Department, its field functionaries, and all other stakeholders for the successful implementation of JJM and providing tap water for the first time to the public of the area.

J&K athletes shine with record-breaking performance at 37th National Games in Goa

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 09: The 37th National Games that concluded today in Goa has scripted a new chapter in the sport's history of the J&K with its athletes stamping an authority of talent, grit, determination, handwork, and perseverance.

While the foundation for J&K's best-ever performance was laid by rhythmic gymnastics bagging silver medals thereafter the performances came rolling one after the other aggregating as many as forty-six medals; including fourteen gold, fourteen silver, and eighteen bronze medals and the team J&K figured in the first twelve performers in the games.

Before this participation, the J&K team had seldom crossed the double figure mark except for two occasions, one in 2011 when the National games were held at Jharkhand and the team bagged twelve medals including four silver and eight bronze titles however the team was ranked twenty-sixth in the medal tally. Similarly in 2015, the team J&K pocketed as many as fifteen medals, including three gold, two silver, and ten bronze medals.

The success achieved by the J&K athletes did not come to the fore overnight but is the hard work of athletes over the years backed by some remarkable transformations in the background.

Sports enthusiasts believe that one of the main factors contributing to the rise of performance can be easily attributed to the transparency in the selection process when fielding athletes for major competitions. Ipso facto the process has been made multilayered to ensure that the best athletes reach the arena. The battery of coaches, the best in the business are available at the beck and call of the athletes, guiding, helping, and supporting them to realize their potential and achieve success in the niche they compete in.

Moreover, the training and learning facilities have come a long way to help athletes hone their skills and the advent of high-performance centres has only made things better in terms of preparations when comparing it to the past. The international-level facilities coupled with expert advice and training have played a crucial role in this year's performance said one of the members of the contingent. With around a hundred Khelo India Centres to train athletes professionally, the number is the highest in the country in addition to the Centre of Excellence in Water Sports and Fencing.

The performance of the athletes is not limited to any sports discipline but they are excelling in almost every field they take to.

The effort pooled in both by the players and the UT administration bears a testimony to the sincerity of the purpose and defeating strong competitors like SSCB, Gujarat, Delhi, Maharashtra, Haryana, Gujarat, and West Bengal etc is quite an accomplishment for everyone to take note of.

Advisor R.R Bhatnagar while extending his congratulations to members of the J&K contingent said that the relentless dedication and unyielding spirit of the athletes has led them to this momentous journey. "The countless hours of rigorous training, strategizing, and hard work you have put into honing your craft have paid off most gloriously," said Bhatnagar.



"Your outstanding performance not only brings honour and glory to J&K but also serves as an inspiration to aspiring athletes across the region," remarked Advisor.

"You have showcased what can be achieved through unwavering determination and a belief in one's abilities," he added.

Congratulating the J&K team, Sarmad Hafeez Commissioner Secretary, Youth Services and Sports Department extended his warmest congratulations to the J&K contingent on their splendid performance and putting up an exemplary show in the national games.

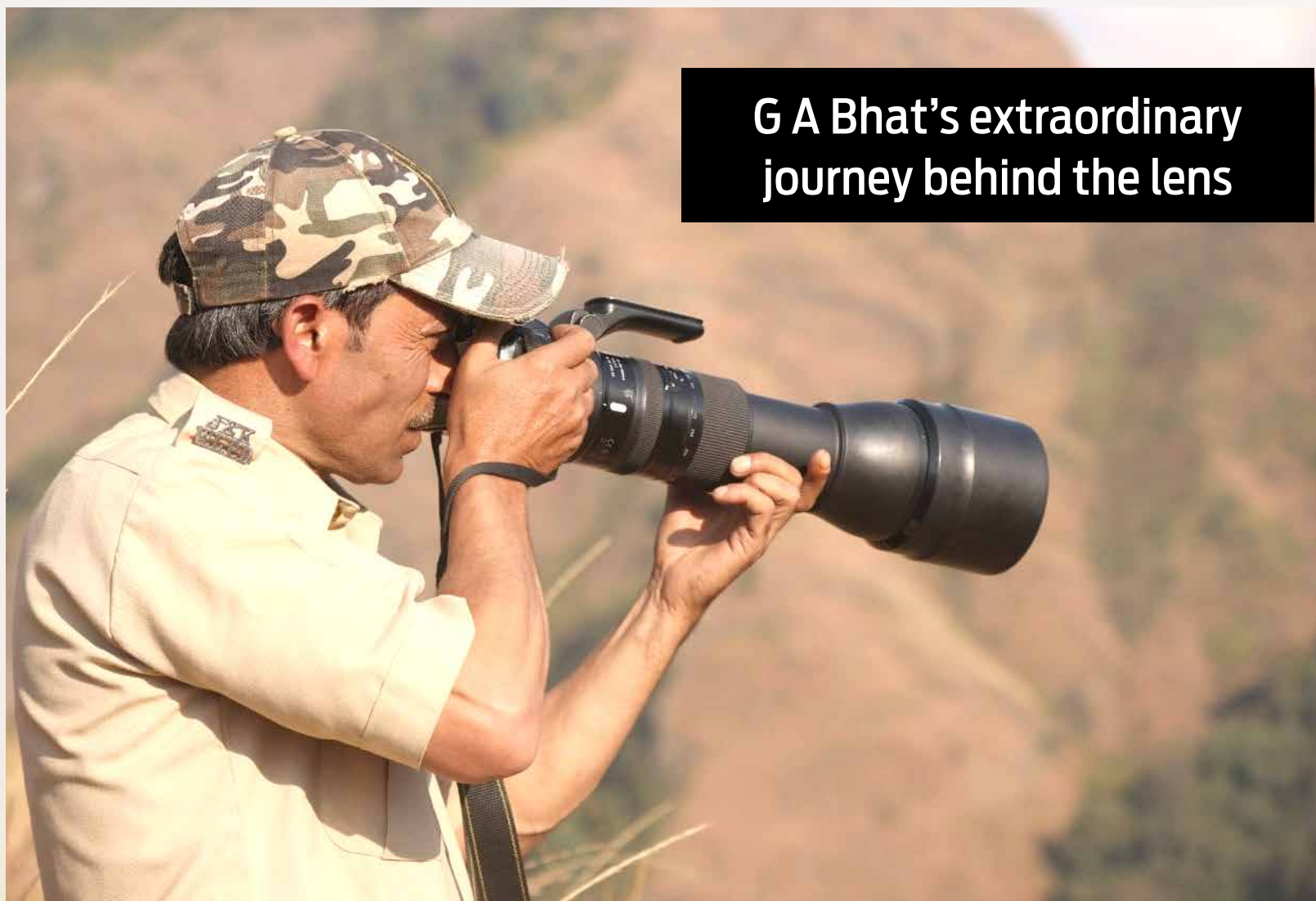
The remarkable achievement in the 37th National Games held in Goa is a testament to the relentless efforts put in by our athletes, coaches, and support staff, said Sarmad. "I am filled with immense pride seeing our players shine on the bigger stages, bringing glory to our union territory, he added. "The athletes have showcased their exceptional skill levels and coupled their passion with determination and commitment to bring laurels to the J&K and performances like this always give you a sense of great satisfaction though I ardently believe that our athletes can touch skies," said Sarmad Hafeez.

Terming the medallists as an inspiration to aspiring athletes and a source of pride, Secretary Sports Council, Nuzhat Gull congratulated the medallists on their exceptional performances. Gull said that each triumph of our athletes is a testament to hard work, talent, and unwavering spirit. "Each member of the J&K Winning Team has demonstrated unparalleled sportsmanship, passion, and commitment, setting an example for others to follow", Gull concluded.

Pertinently the Sports Policy 2022 which incentivized sports is the major boost to the toil that athletes go through. The policy provides for monetary benefits and government employment to the best-performing athletes of the union territory of J&K. Moreover, the allowances entitled to athletes are transferred to their accounts through DBT mode to ensure every single penny reaches the beneficiaries directly.

Meanwhile, congratulatory messages are pouring in from all quarters on the outstanding achievement of the team J&K. "Hope athletes continue the winning streak in the future endeavours too," wrote many sports buffs while taking to the microblogging sites. One of the sports enthusiasts, Waheed wrote that you have made all of us immensely proud, and we cannot wait to witness the incredible achievements that lie ahead for each one of you.

From wildlife guardian to wildlife photographer



G A Bhat's extraordinary journey behind the lens

Srinagar: In the heart of the breathtaking Dachigam National Park, a sanctuary for the rare and elusive, a silent guardian has found a voice through the lens of his camera.

Ghulam Ahmad Bhat, a stalwart member of the Wildlife Department at Dachigam, who has tirelessly served the wilderness for over three decades as a Wildlife Guard, has unveiled a hidden passion - the art of capturing the untamed beauty through the eye of his camera.

Since 1992, Bhat has been the silent custodian of Dachigam's rich biodiversity, but it was only a few years ago that he discovered a fervour for wildlife photography.

His journey from safeguarding these rare species to becoming their visual chronicler is nothing short of remarkable.

"I have been working in the Wildlife Department for the past 31 years. A while ago, I developed an interest in wildlife photography. And when I used to see the pictures that I had clicked, I wanted more and more people to see them," said Bhat, his eyes reflecting the passion that fuels his newfound artistic endeavour.

His privileged access to the no-go zones of Dachigam National Park, where few are permitted without seeking special permission, has allowed him to capture the most intimate moments of the park's residents.

"So very few people are able to see these wild animals," he said, underscoring the exclusivity of his encounters with the denizens of the wild.

Bhat's portfolio boasts an impressive array of species, ranging from the rare Kashmiri Hangul, the enigmatic Black Bear, the elusive Leopard, to the majestic Himalayan Serow, the cunning Jackal, the fiery

Red Fox, and even the serpentine beauties - snakes, including the Levantine or Pit Viper.

His foray into wildlife photography began in 2016, fueled by a desire to share the enchanting allure of the park's inhabitants with the world.

"I want everyone to see these wildlife creatures," he said, echoing his wish to spread the joy of nature and wildlife.

The officers in the Wildlife Department, who share his love for nature, have been supportive of Bhat's passion, never discouraging him from indulging in wildlife photography.

With their encouragement, he has been able to capture breathtaking moments of Black Bears, Hanguls, Leopards, Jackals, Red Foxes, Yellow-Throated Martens, and a plethora of birds, including the rare Orange Bullfinch bird.

One of his most prized accomplishments is capturing the almost mythical Himalayan Serow on both video and photograph, a feat deemed nearly impossible due to the creature's elusive nature.

Bhat has also immortalised the rare Flying Osprey, ensuring that every beat of its majestic wings is preserved for posterity.

Despite his extraordinary achievements, Bhat remains humble.

"I don't want to monetise my wildlife photography. My only wish is people should see photographs of these rare wildlife creatures," he asserted, emphasising his altruistic motivation to share the wonders of the wild with the world.

As Bhat continues to tread the untrodden paths of Dachigam National Park, his camera serves as a bridge between the enigmatic world of the wilderness and the eager eyes of those yearning to witness its untamed splendour.



Bandipora youth transform fisheries landscape

Success story of Basit's trout farming venture under Govt schemes

BANDIPORA: With the implementation of various government schemes, the Fisheries Department Bandipora has brought significant change in fisheries growth and economic development in the district.

Young people like Basit, a 21-year-old trainee journalist from Sumlar village in Bandipora district, are making a positive impact in the Bandipora fisheries sector. Basit, along with his uncle, is setting up fish farms in different areas of Bandipora, creating jobs for local youth.

They established a 'Trout Farm' in their village supported by the Fisheries Department of Jammu and Kashmir. Trout is a valuable cold-cum-freshwater fish that thrives in the region's ideal conditions.

To boost their business, Basit set up a selling pond on the Srinagar-Bandipora highway, attracting customers and increasing their success. Basit, a journalism student, mentioned that they found satisfaction in government schemes over the past four years for the development of the fisheries sector.

With guidance from the Fisheries Department and subsidies provided by the department, Basit and his uncle expanded their venture. Presently, Basit is not only supporting his family but also employing other youth directly and benefiting others indirectly through his trade.

He expressed gratitude to the Fisheries Department for their support and timely advice which resulted in profitable returns from his fisheries business unit.

Basit's venture encourages other young people to take advantage of government schemes for employment opportunities.

Basit and his uncle have not only developed their farm but have also provided good-paying jobs to other youth engaged in their farm. This initiative showcases

the positive impact of youth-driven employment schemes.

Inam ul Haq, resource person of the Fisheries Department informed that the department is running two prominent schemes Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and Aquaculture Development schemes besides other youth engagement programmes.

He said Under PMMSY the department provides two types of units, trout and carp units for which 40 percent of the project cost is Government Assistance and 60 percent is beneficiary share.

Inam informed that the cost of a trout unit is 5.5 lakh for which 2.2 lakh is provided by the Fisheries department, 1.2 lakh for construction cost and 1 lac as input cost of feed, seed and equipment.

Moreover, the Government has launched the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) under which 15 units (14 trout and 1 carp unit) have been sanctioned recently in Bandipora involving local unemployed youth.

Further, the department has also introduced innovative units of Recirculatory Aquaculture System (RAS) for which 50 per cent subsidy is provided by the department which is an intensive high-density fish culture.

Inam ul Haq said the district Bandipora Fisheries Department has established 136 units including 69 trout units and 67 carp units.

He said the Sumlar belt of Bandipora is emerging as the Trout Hub of Bandipora with the establishment of 28 trout units.

He urged youth to come forward and avail benefits of various Government schemes to improve their livelihoods and ensure a sustainable future.



JKPI Publications

Evaluating Air Quality Monitoring Infrastructure in Kashmir



UREEDA RAFIQI

Introduction

Nestled between the mighty Himalayas, Kashmir is often celebrated as the “Paradise on Earth”, with its pristine water bodies, snow-capped mountains, lush green meadows, and clean air. Yet beneath the breathtaking landscapes and grandeur of beauty, it has not escaped the impacts of climate change: receding glaciers, changing weather patterns, and rising temperatures are a few among many other environmental challenges that are affecting the region.

The threat of air pollution persists beneath the calm and peaceful facade of Kashmir’s natural beauty and poses a significant danger to both the ecological stability of the region and the health of its citizens. While the region’s scenic beauty remains unparalleled, in recent years, Kashmir has been subjected to various sources of air pollution, including industrial emissions, vehicular pollution, biomass burning, and dust from construction. There is a pressing need for air quality monitoring in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) due to its unique geographical and environmental factors. This

piece sheds light on the need for comprehensive air monitoring infrastructure in the Kashmir Valley.

Data Deficiency and Monitoring of Air Quality

Monitoring air quality is the first step in understanding the problem of air pollution. It lays the groundwork for approaching the problem. Data generation and dissemination over long periods of time provide valuable insights, which aid in formulating effective pollution management policies. Secondly, the availability of air quality data to the public is an essential step towards enabling people to take preventive measures to protect themselves from the harmful effects of air pollution.

Currently in Kashmir, there is a lack of comprehensive air quality monitoring systems. As per the information available, in terms of monitoring mechanisms, there is only one Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring System (CAAQMS) in Srinagar City installed under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) and three manual monitoring stations installed under the National Air Quality Monitoring Programme (NAMP) at Khrew, Khunmoh, and Lasjan. The Revised Action Plan of Srinagar City under the National Clean Air Program states that there currently are five permanent Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations to monitor PM_{2.5} located at Rajbagh, Hyderpora, Boulevard near Dalgate, Jahangir Chowk and Soura near SKIMS.

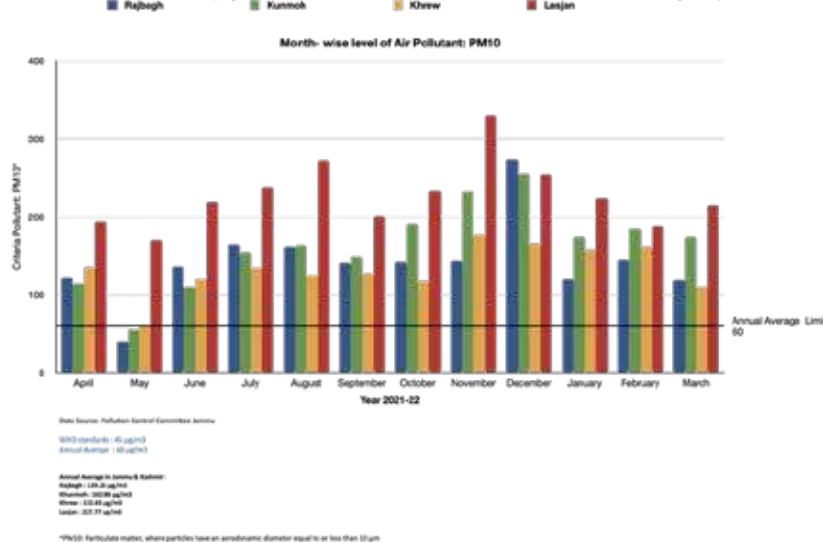
Further, the existing monitoring systems in the Kashmir region are predominantly installed in the industrial belts, aimed at tracking pollution levels from cement factories. However, apart from industries, air pollution in the region also stems from vehicular

emissions and construction activities. Unfortunately, due to the disproportionate distribution of monitoring systems, the pollution levels in the towns are not being accurately captured, posing a significant challenge in identifying the extent of the problem. Since pollution is alarmingly high in the existing areas where the monitoring stations have already been placed, what Kashmir needs is a robust monitoring system for tracking the trends of deteriorating air quality within the region. This data deficiency hinders the accurate assessment of air quality, making it difficult to implement air quality improvement measures in the first place.

What does the Air Quality data in Kashmir suggest?

The existing data available from the Pollution Control Board for the year 2021-22 suggests that the annual average of the pollutants in Jammu and Kashmir is above the average limit of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), i.e 60 µg/m³. Data analysis available from the monitoring stations reveals the levels of air pollution have been significantly high in the Khrew and Lasjan areas of district Pulwama and Khunmoh of district Srinagar.

The national average of maximum standards for criteria pollutant PM10 is set at 60 µg/m³ (annually). The available data on air quality in Kashmir province is from four locations, ranging from 201 to 300 µg/m³ which falls under the poor category,



potentially causing breathing discomfort to a healthy human on prolonged exposure. At the same time, the annual average of PM10 at Rajbagh, Srinagar (which is a non-attainment city under the National Clean Air Programme), remains at 132 µg/m³. The annual average of the PM10 pollutant at Khrew, Khunmoh, and Lasjan was recorded at 132.65 µg/m³, 162.86 µg/m³, and 277.77µg/m³ respectively.

What would make the situation worse is that as the winter season approaches, most of the heating needs are fulfilled by burning biomass and coal, which leads to the rampant spread of outdoor and indoor pollutants. This can make breathing difficult and exacerbate existing respiratory problems. It is alarming that the quality of air is not poor only during the winter but even during the summer season when the air quality is slightly better, the level of PM10 pollutants still remains above 200 µg/m³ in the industrial area of Lasjan. The available data demonstrates how the ambient air quality standards exceed the maximum set standards.

Graph depicting the month-wise level of PM10 for the year 2021-22 in Kashmir Province

What do the guidelines say?

The National Air Monitoring Programme (NAMP), executed by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), mainly identifies four criteria pollutants for routine monitoring at various locations, which are: sulfur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO), respirable suspended particulate matter (RSPM/PM10), and fine particulate matter (PM2.5). The National Air Quality Index, compiled by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), is considered a yardstick for measuring air quality by computing the indices of eight criteria pollutants ranging from 0 to 500. The higher the Air Quality Index (AQI) value, the greater the level of air pollution and the greater the impact on the health of human beings.

According to the Action Plan of Srinagar City under NCAP, vehicular emissions are cited as the primary cause of

high levels of criterion pollutants in Srinagar, followed by dust from road construction activities, such as widening roads and constructing flyovers. The Action Plan also highlights that Srinagar City experienced the highest levels of air pollution from November to January. As per the news reports, the District Level Implementation Committee on NCAP convened in May, 2023 finalized an amount of Rs 33 crore under the Action Plan within the Srinagar City.

Mitigation of Air pollution is a complex problem that necessitates the collaboration of various stakeholders. The government has taken several measures in compliance with the action plan to address the issue of air quality within the stipulated time frame by relevant implementation agencies such as the transport department, traffic police, pollution control committee (JKPCB), municipal corporations, department of floriculture, Srinagar Development Authority, department of industry and commerce, department of environment, ecology and remote sensing, department of health, Department of Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution.

The gist of activities with each separate intervention for improving the air quality index in Srinagar City:

However, it is important to point out the implementation phase of the plan and the total amount of money spent on each activity

List of Activities	Amount envisaged to be spent (in Rs)
Creation of Green Zones: mass plantation across the city with central verges	10.00 crore
Vertical Plantation at various locations including flyovers	5 crore
Landscaping/ development of lawns, walking spaces plantations near hospitals (GMC and SKIMS)	2.5 crore
Earthen shoulders along urban roads	4 crore
Mission Life	2 crore
Management of Horticultural waste	1 crore
Construction of water fountains	2.5 crore
Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities	2.5 crore

so far is unclear. Additionally, we are uncertain about which subsequent actions have been appropriately executed within the given timeframe.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the Action Plan, which was funded with a specific amount under NCAP only applies to the city of Srinagar and no other districts. The valid question here is does this mean that there is no pollution in other districts? Or is it possible that we are simply unaware of the levels of pollutants in other districts due to a lack of monitoring stations?

Conclusion

In light of the above stated so far, considering the multifaceted and disproportionate impact of climate change and ongoing environmental crises, it is crucial to conduct a thorough data study and analysis to identify the sources and magnitudes of pollution within specific geographical regions in Kashmir. Given how serious and urgent the issue of clean air is, it is high time that we have comprehensive data monitoring structures installed in each district for robust monitoring of criteria pollutants in order to devise appropriate interventions to mitigate the levels of rising pollution in the Kashmir province. Furthermore, to meet the time-bound national target of reducing the concentration of particulate matter by 40% by 2026, compliance with the National Clean Air Programme in Srinagar City is also critical to addressing air pollution through policy actions in transport, agriculture, energy emissions, and urban planning.

The unmet challenge of women's access to justice worldwide



NEHA AGGARWAL

Justice may be defined as the degree of fairness. It is based on the fundamental conception of impartiality without being skewed towards any particular entity, community or gender. In fact, the gendered lens of justice dehumanizes the entire concept of justice. This dehumanization and underestimation of Justice for any gender is unequivocally a travesty of justice. Ideally, the idea of justice is predicated on unhindered availability to all. However, in order to ensure the delivery of justice, access to justice in itself becomes problematic since it is contingent upon multiple factors. To measure justice in any society, one needs to be cognizant of the prevailing social context in which it operates.

It is argued that meaningful justice is still inaccessible for an estimated 5.1 billion population which accounts for 2/3rd of the world population. The question arises of who is in the disadvantaged position when we deliberate over access to justice. It is the women and marginalized groups who face daunting social and institutional barriers while accessing justice.

United Nations report states that “woman constitutes half of the world population, perform nearly 2/3 of work hours, receive one-tenth of the world's income and own less than one-hundredth per cent of the world's property.” This statement reflects the critical state of how women stand at the margins of justice.

In this commentary, we delve into the disheartening reality that women and marginalized communities face when attempting to navigate the labyrinthine corridors of justice. A United Nations

report paints a stark picture, revealing that women, despite constituting half of the world's population and contributing nearly two-thirds of work hours, receive only a fraction of the world's income and own a minuscule share of global property.

Meaning of Women's Access to Justice

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2005) “Access to justice is the ability of people to seek and obtain a remedy through formal or informal institutions of justice, in conformity with human rights standards”. However, the definition was short of being comprehensive in its meaning and interpretation. So United Nations Women, a United Nations entity working at the intersection of gender equality and gender empowerment expanded on the UNDP's definition and defined it as the “women's access to justice”. It implies access by women, in particular from marginalized and disadvantaged groups to fair, effective, affordable and accountable mechanisms for the protection of rights, control of abuse of power, and resolution of conflicts. This involves women's capacity to engage in formal and informal judicial systems, seeking and getting a fair and just solution, and participating in institutions and processes that create laws.

COMPONENTS OF WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee did not specifically define the term “women's access to justice”, but rather broadly discussed the necessary components of what it meant by access to justice for women. CEDAW requires state parties to look at the following six interrelated and essential components of women's access to justice:

1. Justiciability requires women to be able to claim their rights under CEDAW as legal entitlements.
2. Availability requires the establishment of justice institutions, such as courts and quasi-judicial bodies, across the whole territory of the State in urban, rural and remote areas, as well as their maintenance and funding.

3. Accessibility requires that all justice systems, both formal and quasi-judicial systems, are secure, affordable and physically accessible to women, and are adapted and appropriate to the needs of women including those who face intersectional or compounded forms of discrimination.

4. Good quality requires that all components of the justice system adhere to international standards of competence, efficiency, independence and impartiality and provide, in a timely fashion, that leads to sustainable gender-sensitive dispute resolution for all women.

5. The provision of remedies requires the ability of women to receive from the justice system viable protection and meaningful redress for any harm that they may suffer.

6. Accountability requires ensuring the functioning of justice systems to guarantee that they are in accordance with the principles of justiciability, availability, accessibility, good quality and provision of remedies.

Challenges: A global outlook

It is important to understand that the mere existence of legal remedies and mechanisms cannot determine women's access to justice when the conditions of access remain impregnated by factors not only inside the legal system but outside it. The grave state of affairs regarding accessing justice can be gauged by the fact that an estimated 5.1 billion people which constitute 66% of the world population are left out of the ambit of justice. Groups such as women and marginalized ones are at the margins of the justice system as they often face social and institutional barriers to accessing justice, such as biases in justice institutions, social stigma, the psychological trauma of bringing claims, and lack of gender-sensitive procedures.

The case of differently abled women warrants a special mention also. For them accessing justice is full of gauntlets. Women and girls with disabilities face multiple forms of discrimination and abuse owing to insidious stereotypes, lack of acceptance, dismissal of their accusations, and imposing attitudes that may scare or discourage them from pursuing justice. Furthermore, complicated or false reporting procedures also exacerbate their agony. A similar situation prevails in the case of aged and older women who lack credible information about their rights and the ways of how to access legal services. What is problematic and worrisome is the rising apathy of enforcement agencies when young and adult girls try to seek justice. These girls face specific impediments while accessing justice because they lack the legal knowledge about their rights and entitlements, and social capacity to obtain legal resources. They are mostly kept out of family matters such as land and company deals. Owing to dependence, guilt, or terror, even women who are conscious of their rights are unable to achieve justice. Many times they may be forced into unwilling marriages or subjected to violence be it at the domestic level, societal or at the level of state. On many occasions, women do not even realize that they are facing it due to the imposed docility upon them due to patriarchal hierarchical structures. Women face everyday violence despite the constitutional safeguards embedded in Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Indian constitution.

Those women who are victims of crime, face unique challenges including difficulty in reporting crimes or due to the stigma or fear of retaliation, or in many instances lack of sensitivity on the part of law enforcement and other actors of the criminal justice system. In addition to this, there is a perpetual fear among these victimized women that the system may fail to acknowledge and address the specific types of crimes, experienced by them, for instance, domestic violence and sexual assault. In fact, in many circumstances, they are intimidated or blamed which deters them from reporting the case which leads to the rising incidence of unreporting.

Lastly, discriminatory legislation limits women's right to make decisions and prevents them from accessing a broader variety of resources. For example, unequal inheritance privileges, unequal marriage rights and obligations, and rules requiring women to seek their husbands' permission before travelling or working. Financial burdens associated with court



United Nations report states that "woman constitutes half of the world population, perform nearly 2/3 of work hours, receive one-tenth of the world's income and own less than one-hundredth per cent of the world's property." This statement reflects the critical state of how women stand at the margins of justice.

litigation, such as court fines and transportation costs, also trigger delays or inability to obtain judicial action.

Way forward

States need to address barriers that prevent or restrict the participation of women and girls with disabilities. With respect to access to justice for older women, states must provide older women with information on their rights and how to access legal services; train the police, judiciary as well as legal aid and paralegal services on the rights of older women, and sensitize and train public authorities and institutions on age- and gender-related issues that affect older women. For young girls and adults, the state should ensure that independent, safe, effective, accessible and child-sensitive complaint and reporting mechanisms are available to them. Legal staff must be appropriately trained officials, working in an effective and gender-sensitive manner; that can avoid marginalisation of girls due to conflicts and disempowerment within their families and the resulting lack of support for their rights. There is also a need to abolish rules and practices that require parental or spousal authorization for access to legal and justice services.

Conclusion

Unhindered access for women to justice is a critical pathway for achieving gender equality as it ensures the protection of economic assets, bodily integrity, political voice and redress on an equal basis with men (UN Women, UNDP, UNODC and OHCHR, 2018). Access to justice bridges the gap between women's rights in law and their rights in real terms. The importance of ensuring justice is also stated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its specific goal 16 "peace, justice and strong institutions". The state's role in providing access to justice is indispensable, encompassing the enactment of protective laws, the provision of legal aid, and the creation of responsive and supportive legal system. By recognizing and actively addressing the barriers that women face in seeking justice, societies can move closer to a more equitable and just future.

Challenges and solutions in waste management: A case study of rural Jammu and Kashmir



MUKHTAR DAR

The beautiful streams, lanes, and roads of rural Jammu and Kashmir, along with its verdant slopes and plains, are increasingly being polluted by waste. Despite government-formulated strategies and strict guidelines, the union territory has failed to handle the waste scientifically. The management of solid and liquid waste has been extensively covered by JKPI in the past. This case study will make an effort to shed light on the developments, constraints, and alternatives in view of the current government initiatives aimed at managing waste in rural areas.



Waste has been dumped between two streams in the Ramhuma village of Budgam.

Waste management involves more than just dumping

waste.

To address the management of liquid and solid waste produced by villages, each state is mandated to identify appropriate technologies or procedures under the Swachh Bharat Mission – Gramin (SBM-G), initiated by the current NDA regime in 2014. Gram Panchayats with 150 families or fewer receive Rs 7,00,000 for this purpose, while Panchayats with more than 500 households receive Rs 20,00,000. However, the administration in Jammu and Kashmir failed to adhere to these guidelines, resulting in a lack of appropriate funds and causing villages in Kashmir to be overwhelmed with waste.

Recently, the government has taken some steps to manage waste in Panchayats. Unfortunately, the lack of knowledge about environmentally friendly waste disposal techniques among the Panchayats and insufficient funds for waste management have led them to adopt harmful methods. For example, in District Budgam, dustbins provided by the Block Development Department in each village for household waste disposal are misused, with waste being disposed of without segregation. Moreover, these dustbins have turned into dumping grounds due to the lack of cleaning and further processing.

To collect and dispose of waste in each Panchayat in Budgam district, the Panchayat bodies were instructed to recruit workers and vehicles. The government will also supply electric vehicles for waste transportation from villages to approved “dumping sites.” The Panchayats will charge residents and business owners a monthly fee for waste pickup, and the collected waste will be deposited at a “central dump site” for multiple villages. Each Panchayat is equipped with a segregation shed, supposed to be built by the block development department, where biodegradable trash can break down into fertilizer for farming. However, JKPI found that some aspects of this plan were implemented in a few areas without adhering to the Solid Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) guidelines of 2014.

The Swachh Bharat Mission emphasizes that Panchayats must

adopt waste management methods that comply with SLWM regulations. However, the Budgam administration has created central dumping sites for villages, and dumping practices have commenced in several villages without processing the waste. For instance, in the Ohangam hamlet in Block Rathsana, waste is collected weekly without segregation and dumped along the village outskirts. This violates SLWM regulations, which mandate waste processing before disposal. Similar circumstances exist in the Chewdara village, where the Sarpanch, Mir Bilal, mentioned facing resistance from villagers against dumping waste on their land.

The government has constructed sheds at several Panchayats for residents to dispose of waste, with plans for vehicles to collect waste and transport it to central dumping sites. Unfortunately, these sheds are being used as dumping sites, such as the one on the Budgam Watrahail road at Zalapora hamlet, posing serious threats to pedestrians with overflowing trash both inside and outside.



Waste Shed at Zalapora

In specific areas, waste is deposited into government-installed dustbins. For example, in the village of Malpora in the Beerwah region, the installed dustbins are now overflowing, and waste is seeping into the surrounding stream. Despite residents paying for waste collection, they express frustration as no collection vehicles ever reach their village.



Dustbins at Malpora village of Budgam

Recommendations

There is a lack of awareness about waste management among the people, making it challenging for Panchayats to handle it. Therefore, it is crucial to instil a sense of waste management

among the general population, with a particular focus on women. Awareness programs can be instrumental in achieving this goal. Preachers should be engaged in spreading the word about the significance of waste management, and the government should encourage them to deliver entire sermons on the topic from a religious perspective. To facilitate easier waste processing in the future, Panchayats should conduct awareness programs, especially those emphasizing waste segregation.

Consider Sharafat Ahmad of Shuganpora Village in Bandipora District as an example of how much waste can be recycled with little effort and how it can also help Panchayats raise money. To procure household waste such as nylon, steel, paper, and other types of plastic from households, Sharafat drives daily from village to village in his automobile and purchases around 100 kg of waste. If Panchayats collaborate with such individuals who make a living by recycling waste, money can be generated, and a significant amount of waste can be recycled.

To prevent soil erosion, the government is constructing check dams on slopes where rain has formed ditches, swales, or channels. While these ditches or channels can be utilized for waste disposal, they must be located far from residential areas, and the top few layers must be covered with soil. Similarly, Panchayats are constructing roads in the village through MNREGA, and since these roads typically require a substantial amount of filling, waste can be effectively used to fill ditches and other areas. This way, a considerable amount of waste can be managed efficiently.



Conclusion

The aforementioned points indicate that the government is adopting an unscientific waste management process in Kashmir. Importantly, the insufficient and unscientific initiatives are not adequate or feasible to address the waste management issue in rural Kashmir. To mitigate the negative and hazardous effects of waste, it is paramount to adhere to Solid Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) rules. The administration must understand that waste should be processed in accordance with prescribed standards and laws. The government should focus on building processing sites rather than dumping sites. To facilitate easier processing in waste management, segregation should occur at the source. Additionally, the infrastructure installed for waste management should not be used merely to alleviate pressure from higher authorities or to expend funds to avoid lapses. Since waste management is a complex matter that significantly impacts our environment, it demands greater honesty and strict adherence to guidelines. Otherwise, the situation will only worsen.



The Ecological Impact of Unchecked Dredging in River Sindh: The Case Study of Ibis Bill



PARVAIZ YOUSUF

Kashmir is known for its rivers and lakes worldwide, which act as a lifeline for the valley. These rivers as well as tributaries support both human and animal life in the whole of the Kashmir valley. One such river is River Sindh which is a vital lifeline for the people and wildlife of the northwestern region of India. As far as biological diversity is concerned, the river supports a lot of vertebrate and invertebrate species. The river is home to several species of animals and birds, including the Ibis Bill, a unique bird species known for its distinctive beak and habitat in rocky riverbeds. However, as with the other ones, this river is also facing severe anthropogenic pressure which is affecting both river health and its wildlife.

The Sindh River flows through the Ganderbal district of Jammu & Kashmir. It's a 108-kilometer-long primary tributary of the Jehlum River and the valley it carves is called the Sindh River. The river begins in the Machoi Glacier, which is located east of the Amarnath shrine and south of the Zojila Pass at an elevation of 4,800 meters. From its source in Kolhoi Glacier, it flows southward past Panjtarni (a camping spot of Amarnath yatra) and then northward into Domail, where it meets a tributary that doubles its volume. On its route to Ganderbal, it crosses the National Highway and flows

primarily in a westerly direction. It is nourished near Kichpora Preng by the Wangath River, which originates in Gangabal Lake and continues downstream. The river is an important source of irrigation and drinking water for the local communities, as well as a vital habitat for a diverse range of flora and fauna. It supports large paddy fields in the whole of the Ganderbal district which indicates how important this river is.

Biodiversity of River Sindh

The river Sindh and its surrounding areas including wetlands are home to a variety of plant and animal species. The riverbed is mostly rocky, with some areas having sandy banks. The diverse types of habitats in and around the Sindh River support a wide range of aquatic and semi-aquatic plants, including water lilies, lotus, and reed beds.

Among fish species, the river is home to Brown trout and Schizothorax (Kashir gaad) which are much sought after by fishermen for their delicious meat. People travel from far and wide to fish in the Sindh River. The river Sindh is home to numerous other aquatic organisms besides fish, such as frogs and freshwater mollusks.

The Sindh River and its nearby wetlands are home to a wide range of bird species as well. They are particularly vital for migratory birds, with many bird species coming from China, Siberia, and Russia to spend the winter months in the region. Some common bird species found in the area include the Common sandpiper, white-wagtail, brown dipper, Grey wagtail, and white-throated dipper. Apart from this, the river Sindh is also home to a unique bird species called the Ibis Bill. The bird species gets its name from its bill which resembles the bill of the Ibis bird, hence the name Ibis bill.

Moreover, the surrounding hills and forests are home to a range of mammalian species, including Himalayan black bears, musk deer, and some species of wild cats. The area is also home to several reptile and amphibian species, including the vipers.

Ecological Threats to River Sindh

Biodiversity

The biodiversity of the river Sindh is under threat from various anthropogenic activities, including pollution, and unsustainable tourism practices. One of the most significant threats to the river's ecosystem is the unchecked dredging of sand and gravel from the riverbed for construction and development purposes. Every day, tens of tractors and trucks carry large amounts of gravel from the river bed.

Unchecked dredging has destroyed the river's rocky habitat, which is crucial for the breeding of several aquatic species, including the Ibis Bill. The Ibis bill is a unique bird species that is native to the rocky riverbeds of the region, and its breeding is highly sensitive to any disturbance. The destruction of the rocky riverbeds due to dredging has resulted in decreased breeding success and a decline in the population of the Ibis Bill.

The excessive levels of pollution in the river also pose a serious threat to the variety of life. Numerous urban centers along the river discharge their raw sewage into it, leading to high concentrations of fecal coliform bacteria and other pollutants. The population of many fish and other aquatic organisms has dropped due to pollution.

The river's environment is in jeopardy due in large part to the effects of unchecked tourism and recreation. The riverside vegetation may be destroyed, aquatic species may be disturbed, and invasive species may be introduced as a result of these actions.

The dredging leads to uneven gravel distribution all along the Sindh River. Some parts of the Sindh river are quite deeper while others are shallower. This is already causing a lot of problems including loss of human life. Many people, mostly young children, lose their lives every year while taking a bath in river Sindh. This is mainly because of the deep trenches that are formed within the river bed. Moreover, the uneven depth leads to an imbalance of the river banks as there is no physical support for the banks. This can lead to small-scale landslides or loosening of the river banks.

Ibis Bill: The resident of River Sindh

The Ibis Bill is a unique bird species that lives in the rocky riverbeds of the northwestern region of India. In addition to these regions, Central Asia and parts of Russia also host populations of this species. This family consists of only one species, the Ibisbill, a rare wader found solely in the flat, rocky rivers of Asia. Some other bird families resembling Ibis Bill include oystercatchers (Haematopodidae) and avocets and stilts (Recurvirostridae) because of some behavioural and physical characteristics.

The bird is easier to identify because there are no other bird species resembling the Ibis bill found in the same area. The sides of the neck, mantle, upper back, and breast of an adult in breeding plumage are bluish-grey. A thin white line and a wider black ring can be seen on the breasts. Brownish-grey can be seen on the lower back, most of the wing coverts, scapulars, and tertials, and the tertials have blackish tips. A white wing bar is seen when in flight. The tail end is a dull greyish brown with some faint blackish banding. The tail is a similar shade of grey-brown, and the outer webs of the rectrices are barbed with black.

The rest of its underside is white, save for the underwing coverts, which are a pale greyish brown, and the flying feathers, which are patterned black and white.

The crimson bill is long and curled downward. It has bright red eyes. You have pinkish-red legs and feet. There are three toes on each foot; they are the outside, middle, and inner toes.

The middle toe lacks a web connecting it to the outer toes.

So, the bird is easily recognizable by its distinctive long, curved bill, which it uses to probe the riverbed for invertebrates. The Ibis Bill is a resident breeder in the region, and it breeds between March and June each year.

Unchecked Mining and Its Impact on Ibis Bill Breeding

The unchecked dredging of river Sindh has had a significant impact on the breeding of the Ibis Bill. The Ibis bill breeds in rocky riverbeds, and the eggs are laid directly on the rocky surface. The eggs are vulnerable to predation and disturbance, and the parent birds are highly sensitive to any disturbance during the breeding season.

A study published in the Journal of Bombay Natural History Society in 2022 concluded that Ibis Bill is facing a lot of human disturbances in River Sindh which is its primary breeding habitat in Kashmir. Among many disturbances faced by the bird, the study concludes that sand and boulder mining contribute most to the disturbance to this beautiful bird species (38 percent in the study). Similarly, another article published by Mongabay concludes that dredging in the river Sindh is one of the most serious problems faced by the Ibis bill.

The dredging of river Sindh has destroyed the rocky riverbeds, which are essential breeding grounds for the Ibis Bill. The dredging has also led to increased water flow, which can wash away the eggs and destroy the nests. In addition, the dredging has disturbed the parent birds during the breeding season, leading to decreased breeding success and a decline in the population of the Ibis Bill. The bird requires shallow waters to feed on invertebrates in the water. With dredging, the water becomes deeper, making it tougher for Ibis Bill to reach the bottom of the river for feeding.

Recommendations

To mitigate the impact of unchecked dredging on the breeding of the Ibis bill, a lot needs to be done. Govt. should take serious steps in controlling the boulder, and sand dredging all along the river Sindh. Is not possible, they can at least limit the dredging of river Sindh during the breeding season of the Ibis bill. This would minimize the disturbance to the breeding birds and allow them to breed without interference. The dredging could be scheduled to take place outside the breeding season, ensuring that the breeding grounds of the Ibis bill are not disturbed.

Another recommendation is to establish protected areas for the Ibis Bill in the river Sindh. These protected areas could be designated breeding grounds for the Ibis Bill, and any dredging or mining activities could be prohibited in these areas. As of now, there are no particular areas designated for Ibis bill breeding, meaning that there is technically no place where this beautiful bird species can feel safe, at least at the time of breeding. So, there is a strong need to frame rules and regulations dealing with limiting or stopping dredging in River Sindh. This would provide a safe breeding ground for the Ibis bill and ensure that the population can thrive.

Another recommendation is to increase awareness about the ecological importance of the Ibis bill and the impact of unchecked dredging on its breeding. This could involve workshops, public education campaigns, and training sessions for local communities, government officials, and other stakeholders. The awareness programs could also include the importance of responsible mining practices and the need to balance economic development with environmental protection.

Finally, there is a need for increased monitoring and study of how dredging affects Ibis bill reproduction. To do this, researchers might study the ecological effects of dredging on the wildlife in the Sindh River and conduct frequent surveys to track the effectiveness of Ibis bill reproduction. Some studies have been conducted recently, but there is always room for more.

Eurasian Otter: From extinction in Kashmir to its recent sighting in the Chenab River



SEMTRAN PARVAIZ

The Eurasian otter, also known as the common otter, belongs to the Mustelidae family and thrives in a semi-aquatic habitat. With its sleek, elongated body, webbed feet, and a dense coat that provides both insulation and protection from the frigid waters, it's ideally adapted for its aquatic lifestyle. These otters have a wide-ranging habitat spanning from Europe and Asia to the Indian subcontinent.

Historically, the Kashmir Valley was home to a thriving population of Eurasian otters, known locally as VODUR or AAB VODUR. These otters inhabit rivers, streams, and marshes, subsisting on a diet of fish, crustaceans, and various aquatic invertebrates. Regrettably, their numbers have significantly dwindled in the valley, approaching the brink of extinction due to rapid population declines. Nonetheless, there remains a glimmer of hope, as a recent sighting of three otters near the Chenab basin close to Jammu signals a potential resurgence.

Eurasian Otter: Exploring Its Fascinating Biology

The Eurasian otter, a captivating semi-aquatic mammal, displays an intriguing blend of biology and behavior tailored for aquatic life.

Belonging to the Mustelidae family, which includes weasels, ferrets, and minks, these otters are the largest otter species in

Europe. Adults can reach lengths of 1.2 meters (4 feet) with tails included, weighing between 7 and 12 kilograms (15 to 26 pounds). Their smooth, dark brown fur functions as both insulation and protection against cold water.

With compact, robust legs and webbed feet, Eurasian otters demonstrate formidable swimming abilities. Their strong toe claws enable them to grasp slippery surfaces, such as prey or rocks. Their elongated snout and flattened heads are precision tools for catching fish and other aquatic prey.

Eurasian otters, primarily solitary creatures, exhibit heightened activity during morning and evening hours. Their territorial nature finds expression through scent markers, vocalizations, and the creation of excrement pits. These creatures employ a diverse range of sounds, from whistles to chirps and growls, for inter-otter communication.

Remarkably, Eurasian otters can remain submerged for up to eight minutes without resurfacing for air. With a top swimming speed of 7 kilometers per hour and a diving depth of 20 meters (66 feet), they are adept aquatic hunters. Their carnivorous diet encompasses an array of prey, from fish and crabs to mollusks, amphibians, and even small mammals.

Tragically, the 20th century saw a severe decline in Eurasian otter populations due to habitat loss, water pollution, and hunting, particularly for their fur. Pesticides, notably DDT, further exacerbated the depletion of fish populations, which indirectly affected otters.

In response, Europe launched conservation initiatives during the 1970s and 1980s to protect otter populations. Reintroduction efforts revived regions where otters had vanished, while protected areas were established to foster their resurgence. These concerted actions have yielded positive results, leading to increased otter numbers in several regions. As of now, the IUCN Red List classifies them as "Near Threatened."

Causes of Eurasian Otter Extinction in Kashmir Valley

The extinction of Eurasian otters in the Kashmir Valley can be attributed to a combination of factors that have disrupted their delicate ecosystem.

Habitat Loss: The foremost factor driving the Eurasian otter's decline is the loss of their natural habitat. Human activities, including urbanization, agricultural expansion, and industrial development, have wreaked havoc on wetlands and water bodies. These areas are vital for otter survival, providing both sustenance and shelter. As they diminish, so does the availability of food and refuge for otters.

Poaching: Poaching poses a significant threat to Eurasian otters in the Kashmir Valley. Traditionally, otters were sought after for their various body parts, which were believed to have medicinal properties. This has led to the targeting of otters for their fur, flesh, and other body parts. Moreover, misconceptions among local fishermen, who see otters as competitors responsible for dwindling fish populations, have exacerbated the decline of the otter population.

Hydroelectric Development: The construction of hydroelectric generating plants has posed a serious risk to Eurasian otters in the Kashmir Valley. Dams and reservoirs alter the flow of rivers and disrupt the local ecosystem, making it difficult for otters to find suitable habitats and prey. These changes have further exacerbated the challenges faced by otters in the region.

In the Jammu & Kashmir valley, research into the species' ecology and behavior is an essential component of conservation efforts. This research aids in identifying specific areas that require targeted conservation actions to help protect and potentially revive the dwindling otter population.

A Glimpse of Hope: Rediscovering the Eurasian Otters in Jammu and Kashmir

The debut photograph of this elusive semi-aquatic carnivorous mammal signals a ray of hope for the dwindling otter population in Jammu and Kashmir. In October 2020, a remarkable discovery unfolded as three Eurasian otters were captured within the pristine waters of the Chenab River for five days. This remarkable revelation was unveiled through a research article published in the Journal of Threatened Taxa (JOTT) in February 2023.

Scientists from the University of Jammu employed sophisticated video traps to document these elusive creatures, unveiling two adult otters and one young adult otter residing in the Neeru stream, nestled in the heart of the Chenab basin.

Their groundbreaking findings not only confirmed the continued existence of this magnificent species within the upper Chenab basin but also shed light on a thriving otter population

within the crystalline waters of Neeru. These regions, blessed with remote seclusion from human habitation, rocky riverbeds, and narrow valleys, remain unsuitable for the disruptive sand and gravel mining activities, creating an ideal haven for these otters. The survival of the Eurasian otter considered a "flagship" species and a pivotal indicator of the ecological well-being of aquatic habitats, bodes well for the Neeru stream. This is particularly noteworthy as the otter is classified as "near threatened" on the IUCN Red List.

The Neeru, a perennially flowing stream stretching over 30 kilometers, originates from the lofty Kailash Lake, situated at an altitude of 3,900 meters, and eventually joins forces with the mighty Chenab River at Pul-Doda. As it courses through its path, the Neeru stream traverses small towns, semi-urban areas, and significant urban centers, raising the prospect of uncovering additional streams harboring otter populations.

This remarkable rediscovery underscores the importance of safeguarding and preserving these pristine water ecosystems and the invaluable species that call them home.

Conclusion

The Eurasian otter remains conspicuously absent from the Kashmir Valley, its presence marked only by an alarming lack of evidence. This absence underscores a sombre reflection on the region's environmental challenges and serves as a stark testament to the lapses in natural ecosystem preservation. Otters, as guardians of aquatic equilibrium, play a pivotal role, and their extinction carries profound ramifications.

The demise of Eurasian otters in the Kashmir region is, regrettably, a direct consequence of human activities such as deforestation, pollution, and overfishing. Their once-abundant habitats have dwindled due to the encroachment of human development and construction, leaving these remarkable creatures with dwindling refuge options. The degradation of wetlands and river ecosystems compounds the threat, as these are critical to the otters' survival.

Yet, a glimmer of optimism emerged with the recent discovery of three otters in the Jammu region, breaking a hiatus spanning over three decades. The survival of this species hangs in the balance, necessitating prompt action from governmental authorities to address the pressing environmental concerns and salvage their habitats.

To safeguard this fragile otter population and prevent the fading of our glimmer of hope, authorities must expedite their efforts. This includes habitat restoration, the establishment of protected areas, and the implementation of robust environmental and wildlife protection laws and policies. Concurrently, educational and awareness campaigns become pivotal, enlightening people on the significance of biodiversity and the urgency of conservation endeavours. These represent the initial strides on a lengthy path towards the conservation of otters in Jammu and Kashmir.



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Snowfall in higher reaches of J&K signal onset of winter

