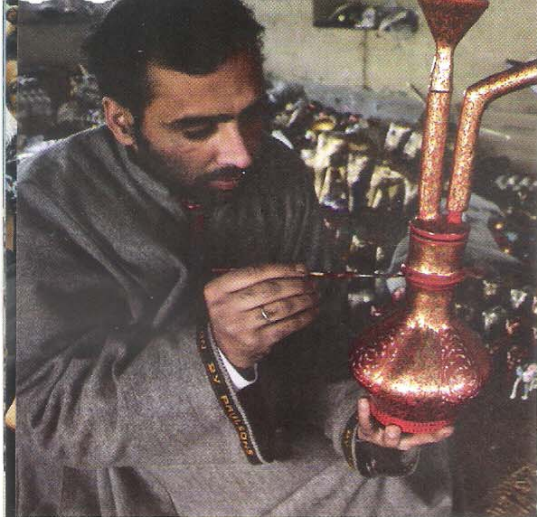


Jammu & Kashmir Update

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Rs.64 crore cluster project for artisans

Jammu and Kashmir's handicrafts are famous for their exquisite craftsmanship and are popular across the world.

The handicrafts sector provides direct employment to many artisans and generates significant revenue for the state.

For its holistic growth and development, to improve the economic lot of artisans and to equip them to meet the challenges of globalised environment, the state government has been implementing several developmental and welfare schemes.

One such effort is a plan to set up artisan clusters in Srinagar.

The state's Industry and Commerce Minister, S.S. Salathia, said a project of Rs.64 crore has been initiated, under which, ten artisan clusters will be established very soon.

Various trades, including papier mache, Khatamband, wood carving, Pashmina, copper work, leather work, Kani shawl, Sozni embroidery and willow work would be taken up under these clusters.

"It is a very good step taken by the government for arti-

sans. Earlier, middlemen used to get all the benefits and profits. Now, artisans will benefit from the setting up of these clusters," said Shakir Ahmad, an artisan based in Srinagar.

"It is a welcome step. It will eliminate middlemen and benefit artisans directly," said Ghulam Hassan Khan, another artisan from Srinagar.

"Under this scheme, bank facilities and raw materials will be provided, which will benefit artisans," said Ghulam Jeelani, another artisan.

Salathia said the scheme would be extended to other parts of the state. He also assured artisans that land would be provided to them, and added that the process of identification had already been taken up so that they could set up modern units that would enable them to earn a livelihood with dignity.

Various schemes have been launched for rehabilitation of deserving, genuine, needy and skilled artisans of the state, he revealed.

He also said that a special card would be issued to artisans and a policy would be formulated to provide interest-free loans to cardholders.



Now, a Kisan Credit Card for every farmer

Agriculture and allied activities is the mainstay of Jammu and Kashmir's economy. It provides employment to about 70 percent of the state's population.

Growth and expansion of this sector is critical for the state's prosperity and economic development, and the welfare of the large population associated with it.

In an effort to improve agricultural activities, the state government has announced that every farmer in the state will be provided a Kisan Credit Card (KCC).

Jammu and Kashmir Agriculture Minister Ghulam Hassan Mir said the scheme has been launched to make available financial support to the farming community.

"KCC will be provided to every farmer in the state," said Mir at a recent func-

The Jammu and Kashmir Government has been encouraging investment in the state.

Entrepreneurs are now beginning to invest in different sectors, and the recent opening of McDonald's first family restaurant in Jammu, is an indicator that normalcy is fast returning to Jammu and Kashmir.

Devinder Singh Rana, Political Advisor to Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, inaugurated the outlet.

Speaking at the launch of the restaurant, Rana said the event was a direct result of the restoration of peace and normalcy in the state, brought about by the Omar Abdullah-led coalition government.

He added that credit went to Abdullah's leadership for creating a peaceful environment, which had led to the growth, prosperity and economic resurgence of the state.

He also asked the McDonald's team to expand its footprint across the state to the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh.

Managing Director & JV Partner, McDonald's India (North & East), Vikram Bakshi, told reporters that McDonald's would open three to four restaurants in Jammu and Kashmir.

McDonald's, now in Jammu



"With the new restaurant at Jammu, we have entered a very important market in the state of J&K," said Bakshi.

He added, "This is our first restaurant in one of the foremost cities in the state. We are very hopeful of expanding further in this fast emerging region of the country."

The restaurant is located on Residency Road in Jammu, with 2,100 square feet of space, a seating ca-

capacity for about 100 people and it has a contemporary look.

It is designed with the state-of-the-art technology driven MFY (Made for You) kitchen. MFY is a unique concept where the food is prepared after the customer has placed his order, and yet served very quickly.

McDonald's currently has 258 restaurants in India, of which, 126 are in North and East India, and 132 in West and South India.

in Pulwama district, while distributing the cards among 1,000 farmers.

The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) is an innovative credit delivery mechanism, and one of the many initiatives taken to meet the production credit requirements of the farmers in a timely and hassle free manner.

Mir asked farmers to utilise the money prudently and return the amount to the bank in due course to ensure the scheme's success.

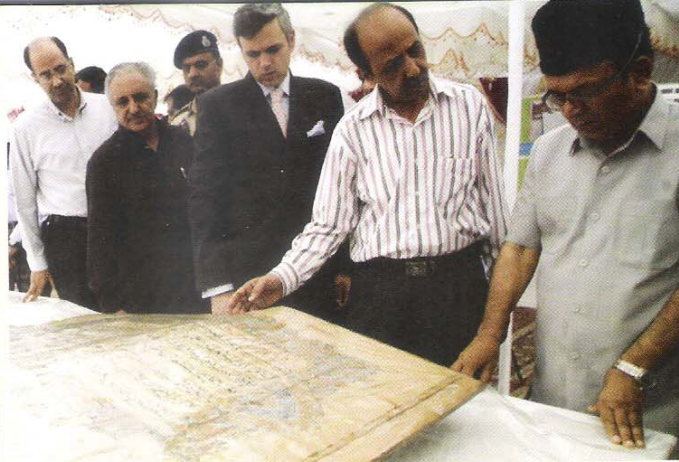
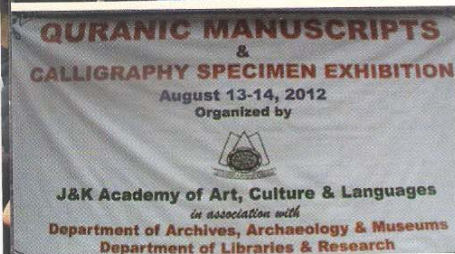
The minister said the scheme would boost agriculture activity and help farmers to meet their short-term credit requirements for cultivation of crops, post-harvest expenses and loans for the marketing of produce in a timely manner.

Mir also said the government is contemplating to offer farm mechanisation on a rental basis to farmers so that those on the margins can benefit.

He further said there was a need to introduce and acquire the latest agri-horti techniques to make agriculture a profitable activity.

A comprehensive plan to tap ground water resources to provide irrigation to the Karewas (tongue-shaped spurs with deep ravines lying to the west of the River Jhelum) of Jammu and Kashmir has been made, and tube wells were being dug across the state to ensure adequate irrigation facilities for un-irrigated cultivable areas, he added.





Rare Kashmiri manuscripts to be digitised

Jammu and Kashmir's rich manuscript wealth will be digitised under a national preservation mission in collaboration with the Union Human Resource Development Ministry.

Union Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal during his visit to the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, announced this recently.

Khalid Bashir, the secretary of the academy, said: "We have a very rich collection of manuscripts in different languages, totalling about 600. These comprise copies of the holy Koran. We also have a script of the holy Koran, which was calligraphed by a Kashmiri, Fateh Ullah Kashmiri, in the 13th century. Likewise, we have another manuscript which is perhaps the only one in the world because it is written with saffron ink."

The academy also has copies of the Bhagwad Gita and the Mahabharata in Persian, a Persian manuscript written in calligraphy with the nail of the thumb, popularly known as 'Khat-e-Nakhun'.

The academy recently held a two-day exhibition of rare Quranic manuscripts and works of calligraphy in Srinagar that was inaugurated by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

"It is our duty and responsibility to protect this wealth of Quranic manuscripts for the future generation," said Abdullah while granting Rs.10 lakh for the digitisation of the manuscripts.

Digitisation would enable people from all over the world to access and explore rare information through the Internet.

Niyaz Ahmad, an employee of the academy, appreciated the decision taken by the government.

"This is a very good step, as this is a national heritage, and people have done their work by preserving it. Now, it is up to the new generation to preserve it, so that it can be made available to the coming generations."

"Information Technology has brought about a revolution and we can digitise the collection, and access it on the Internet from any part of the country," said Tariq Shafi, a resident of Srinagar.

Besides digitisation and preservation, the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development would also take up the translation of standard books of different languages into local languages of Jammu and Kashmir and vice versa.

'Tehzeeb Mahal', a museum, is also to be set up in the state as a hub of art, culture and literary activities.

Radio taxi service for Srinagar

Jammu and Kashmir's first radio taxi service was launched recently in Srinagar in an effort to provide better transport facilities to tourists and to the people of the city.

The fifty taxis deployed, come fitted with on road electronic billing system, GPS tracking system, route verification system, in cab security and a card payment system.

They are linked 24 hours a day to the master control room and always tracked by a controller.

Its drivers are not only trained, but their identity is also verified before they are recruited.

Passengers can hire the taxis by making a phone call to the control room. On



Centre sanctions Rs.1248 crore for infrastructure development

In a landlocked state like Jammu and Kashmir, a good road network is a critical infrastructure requirement for rapid social and economic development.

It provides connectivity to remote areas, accessibility to markets, schools and hospitals, and opens up backward regions to the benefits of trade and investment.

The Central Government recently sanctioned Rs.1248 crore for road connectivity and for building long span bridges in Jammu and Kashmir under Phase-VIII New Connectivity of Bharat Nirman Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

Bharat Nirman is a Government of India development program for strengthening the country's rural infrastructure, including roads.

The PMGSY is a fully funded centrally sponsored scheme that seeks to provide all weather road connectivity in rural areas of the country.

The grants approved by the Union Ministry of Rural Development include Rs.310.37 crore under Bharat Nirman Stage-I, Rs.851.92 crore under PMGSY Stage-II, Rs.21.02 crore under normal PMGSY (for border



blocks), Rs.55.39 crore for long span bridges and Rs.9.45 crore under roads and bridges Stage-II.

This will enable the state to initiate 484 road connectivity works and construction of 50 bridges involving a total road length of 2651.23 kilometres.

It will help to cover 10 habitations of more than 1,000 population each,

63 habitations with over 500 population each and 42 habitations each of more than 250 population.

The improvement in road infrastructure will help open up far-flung and remote areas, unleash their growth potential, generate employment opportunities and bring about economic change, and improve the life of the people there.

Receiving a call for pick up/drop, the reservation centre uses its GPRS screen to direct the nearest available taxi to the client and informs him of the time the taxi is expected to take to reach them.

The charges are Rs.25 per kilometre and Rs.50 for getting the cab at the location.

Mohammad Nadeem, a resident of Srinagar, welcomed the initiative that aims to provide safe and hassle-free service to the residents and tourists.

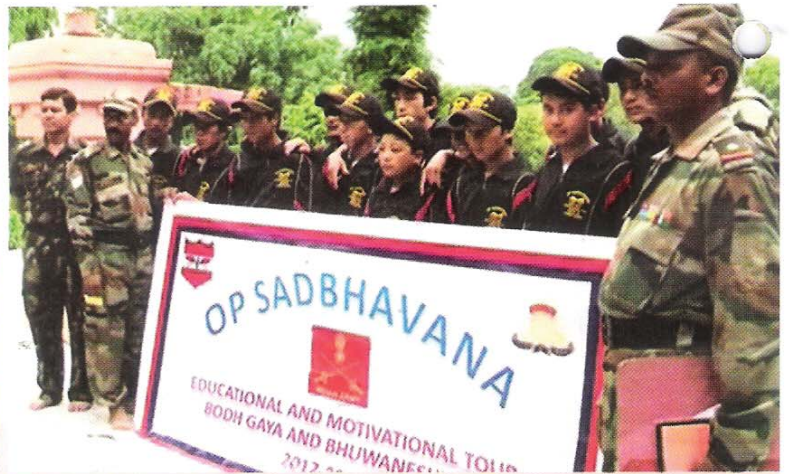
"The introduction of radio taxis is a good concept. Earlier, taxi drivers and auto drivers used to overcharge the helpless tourists and passengers. Now, there will be transparency, as the charges will be metered," said Mohammad Nadeem.

Mohammad Asif Kawoosa, the manager of the radio taxi service, said the services are available 24 hours and are tracked for the safety of the passengers.

"Our services can be availed round-the-clock. The services are monitored and are very safe for our families to go anywhere, anytime," said Kawoosa.

He added that initially, the first fleet of taxis would work within the municipal limits of Srinagar. The company would be getting another 50 taxis, and had also applied for running the service in Jammu.





Ladakh students on educational, motivational tour

Fifteen school students from Ladakh recently visited Bodh Gaya in Bihar and Bhubaneswar in Odisha as part of a 17-day-long educational tour.

Organised by the Indian Army under 'Operation Sadbhavana', the tour was flagged off from Nimu in Ladakh. On the occasion, each member of the tour group was presented with a cap, a tracksuit and shoes as souvenirs.

The aim of the tour was to provide students with some insight into the culture and customs prevalent in other parts of the country and make them aware of developments taking place, so as to broaden their outlook and help in their integration with the national mainstream.

"It is an educational and motivational tour in which 15 students had come to participate from Ladakh. The main aim behind organising this tour was to show them the development that has taken place in the country, and to motivate them, so that they can

develop a vision which will help in the development of their own region," said Lieutenant Colonel V S Murti.

The excursion group expressed satisfaction with the opportunity that they had been given to visit different places, as it helped them to better understand cultural diversities.

"I was very happy to see the Bodh Gaya temple, about which I had only read in books. I will share all my experiences with my friends," said Shakeel Ahmad, a student from Ladakh.

The army has played a major role in the development of Ladakh, and has extended its full support towards integrating the people of this remote region into the national mainstream through various programmes.

One of them is Operation Sadbhavana, under which, excursion tours are organised to different parts of the country.



Kashmir hosts Federation Cup Throw Ball Championship

Jammu and Kashmir recently hosted the 23rd Federation Cup Throw Ball Championship.

The three-day championship was organised by the Jammu and Kashmir Throw Ball Association in collaboration with the Throw Ball Federation of India at the sports ground of the Government College for Women in Srinagar.

"The Jammu and Kashmir Throw Ball Association took the responsibility to organise the 23rd Federation Cup National Throw Ball Championship, and this is happening for the first time," said Secretary General, Throw Ball Federation of India, Kamal Goswami.

A Jan from Jammu and Kashmir said the tournament provided a platform to the players to test their sporting skills and showcase their talent at the national level.

"This is the first time we are playing in the nationals, and, we had a lot of fun. I feel really happy seeing so many

participants, and it helped us hone our talent," said Jan.

"I felt really nice over here. I have taken part in competitions in other states, and I had a great time here," said Jyoti Singh, a player from Madhya Pradesh.

As many as 20 teams, both in the male and female categories, from various states and union territories of the country, participated in the championship.

The Delhi teams won the championship in both categories.

The government has initiated various projects in the state to provide a boost to sporting activities, and has created opportunities for budding sportspersons to compete at both the national and international levels.

Throw ball is a non-contact ball sport played across a net between two teams of seven players on a rectangular court. At present, it is played both indoors and outdoors, with floodlit competitions becoming more and more popular.

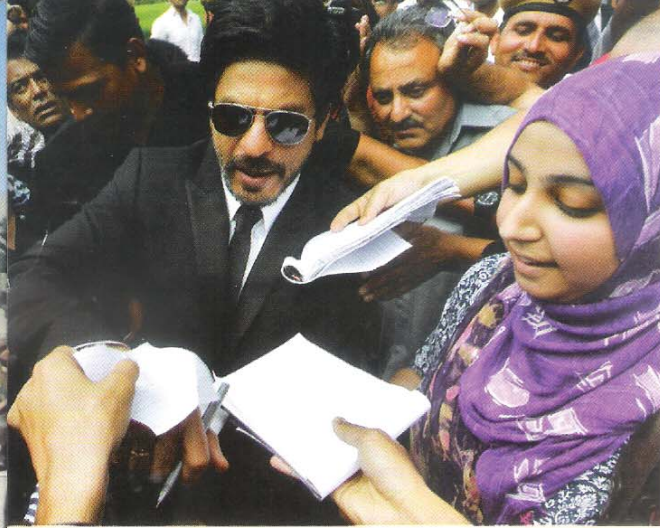
From the desk of Editor

Jammu and Kashmir Update is a unique initiative of Ministry of Home Affairs to showcase the positive developments taking place in the State. The ambit of the magazine covers all the three regions of the state with focus on the achievements of people.

To make it participatory, the magazine invites success stories/ unique achievements, along with photographs in the field of sports, adventure sports, studies, business, art, culture, posi-

tive welfare initiatives, social change, religious harmony, education etc. The selected articles/stories will be published in the web version of the magazine and the best among them would be suitably rewarded. Decision of the Selectors in the regard would be final.

Interested person may send soft copy of their articles / stories along with their name, father's name, complete address, telephone number with STD code, email address to Jammuandkashmirupdate@gmail.com



Shah Rukh Khan rekindles Bollywood's romance with Kashmir

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan recently shot for his first ever film in Kashmir, in his over two-decade-old film career.

Khan reached Kashmir after completing a schedule in Ladakh for Yash Chopra's film 'Jab Tak Hai Jaan', which also stars actresses Katrina Kaif and Anushka Sharma.

His presence brought in large crowds to Pahalgam, which was a favourite Bollywood location in the 1970s and 1980s.

Many said Khan's visit to the state would send out a message to the world about normalcy returning to the region and give a fillip to tourism.

"This would help to revive tourism. We expect more actors to come here now, and that will give a boost to tourism," said Abdul Salam, a hotel manager.

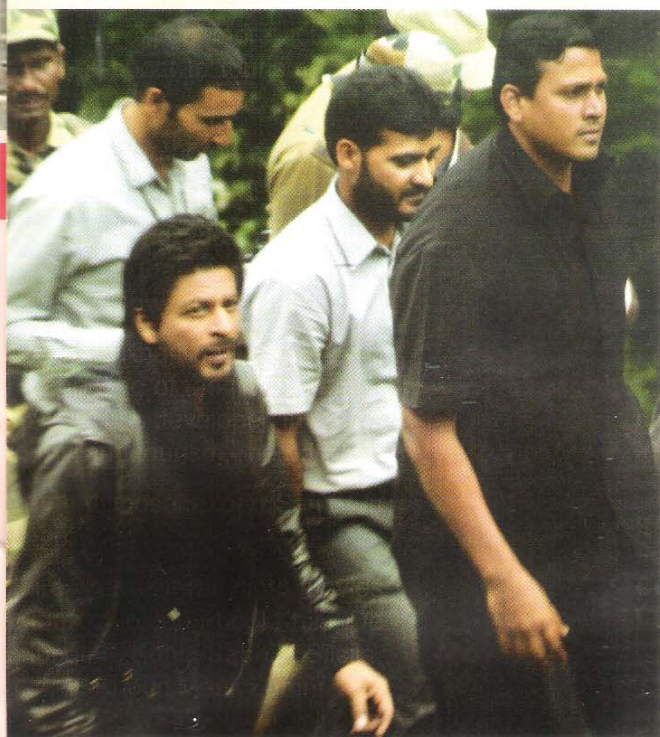
Residents of the area were thrilled and gathered at the location of the shoot to catch a glimpse of their favourite star.

"The weather in Pahalgam was very good and there was a large crowd to see the shoot. We hope that more celebrities from the film industry will visit Kashmir now," said Ishfaq.

"People got to know that Shah Rukh Khan had come, so a large crowd gathered to see the shooting of the film. There is no security problem here, and tourism has developed in recent times. This will go a long way in reviving tourism," he added.

The superstar plays an Army bomb disposal expert Samar in the romantic film 'Jab Tak Hai Jaan'.

Kashmir has served as a backdrop for several Hindi movies like Aarzoo, Kashmir Ki Kali, Betaab, Jab Jab Phool Khile, Do Badan, Aap Aaye Bahar Aaye, Junglee, Kabhi Kabhie, Silsila, Rocky, Mission Kashmir, Tahan, Saat Khon Maaf, Lamha and Rockstar, among others.



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