

# Project Empathy forges school, family, community bonds in Boniyar



JD/ AADIL AKBAR BARAMULLAH, OCT 19

The year 2020 was like turning the page in human history. We were in the grip of a virus that killed mercilessly. Countless people were dying. Others were suffering the deepest pain of losing their loved ones. In the midst of such traumatic events, we saw the best and the worst of humanity. We were abandoning each other when we needed each other the most. The isolation suffered by people all across the world was terrifying. Perhaps we were being told to slow down. To hear, connect and be there for one another was difficult. That is when we coined Project Empathy to bring 'alive' conversations around emotions, feelings, fears amongst school children and teachers. "We are looking

forward to creating Schools, Community and Family partnerships to care for the children we share", said Vibha Lakhera, the Founder of Project Empathy. Empathy is the highest form of intelligence. It compels us to process multiple layers of data about another person, feel for them and act from a place of compassion towards them. Empathy education or empathy training rewires the way we function as there are changes that occur in our brains which activate the mirror neurons. It directly affects our sense of well being and mental health. Children and teachers were rejoining the schools after a gap of two long, painful years. It was essential to understand one another at a slower pace. Therefore Project Empathy initiated a six months long intervention

in Boniyar, Kashmir, Kohima, Chieswema in Nagaland and Delhi. This is the first phase of the project. Teachers workshops were conducted at the outset to orient the educators about the importance of addressing empathy in the schools and about the format of the intervention. The project was backed with the baseline research in collaboration with Sreepriya Menon who is a trained therapist. In Kashmir, the Principal of Army Goodwill School, Boniyar, Mr. Rizvi, said that it was need of the hour to introduce empathy in the schools. The students have received the project very well and so have the teachers. It is a new topic which is not a part of the academic education. Yet it has generated interest amongst the teachers to not only educate them-

selves about the concepts included in the project, but also to deliver them to the students with utmost care and sincerity. According to Tafheem who is coordinating the execution of the project in AGS Boniyar, "As far I have observed them, they have developed creative thinking. Apart from emotional development students have also developed in their vocabulary, whenever they have to write the answers they also go for choosing the right words. Besides behavioural changes, it is also adding to their academics." It has resulted in the students becoming more confident about sharing their feelings and emotions with their peers and teachers. They have also become creative in giving expression to their ideas. They have learnt that it is safe to openly talk about their fears and doubts without being judged by their classmates or teachers. This has helped in addressing the discriminatory thoughts and a sense of separation that children experience from one another. The project has thrived on storytelling, journaling, artwork, discussions, Nukkad Natak and many such creative ways of introducing empathy and compassion to the school ecosystem. Project Empathy's activities and approach reinforces the humanitarian role of how the army participates in developing civilian lives and safe-

guards health and rights of those most vulnerable, especially in conflict areas. There is an extreme impact of multiple stressful factors contributed by tough temperatures and terrain, distance from family and civic life and influence of critical incidents in these areas where army works and plays a huge role. By initiating this work with Project Empathy, the army has supported the well being of families and communities residing there. It is important to bring such concepts more and more in the regular discourse of the schools to sow seeds of change in the consciousness of our students. We are grateful for the support given to the project by the school authorities; Principal Mr. Rizvi, Ms Tafheem and all the staff members of army goodwill school, Boniyar, the officers of Dagger Division; General Ajay Chandpuriya, Brig. Phogat, Brig Dhillon and Lt Col. Shiraj; The Co founder Mrs Sudha Gemini; project staff, Ms Anita Nayyar, Ms. Apala Naithani, The Research Partner Ms. Sreepriya and the guidance that we got from our Advisors, Ms. Usha Rai, Ms. Monica Banerjee and Mr. Shashidhar Nanjundiah. We are looking forward to initiating phase II of the project in 2023 and increasing our footprints in the Valley.

# Nation witnessing economic, cultural, scientific renaissances under leadership of PM Modi: LG



JD/ SADAF SHARIEF SRINAGAR, OCT 19

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today inaugurated the Kumaon Literary Festival at the Kashmir International Convention Centre. The Lt Governor said that the festival brings together celebrated authors, poets, thinkers of the country to celebrate art, culture & literature and provides an opportunity to the people to explore new ideas and perspectives. J&K is home to rich literary tradition, dating back to many millennia and our quest for knowledge continues, he further observed. The Lt Governor said that under the guidance of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, dedicated efforts are being made since last two years to revive and promote J&K's culture, art, literature, cinema, and music. The nation is witnessing Economic, Cultural and Scientific Renaissances under the leadership of Hon'ble PM. Our ancient literary culture and values are rich and diverse and always guided us on the path of peace, co-existence and brotherhood, the Lt Governor further added. Terming Culture as a way of life and a mirror that reflects people's aspiration and socio-economic transformation, the Lt Governor said efforts are being made to involve local artists and peo-

ple as stakeholders in maintenance and promotion of art, heritage sites etc. Recalling the contribution of famous writers and thinkers from Jammu Kashmir, the Lt Governor said the cultural ethos of our great Nation is deeply connected with the Jammu Kashmir UT since time immemorial. From storytelling to Classical Indian Music, Jammu Kashmir is the land of various creative mediums, he added. There are end numbers of revered writers from Jammu Kashmir, who have enriched the cultural history of India. I believe that the past was prosperous and, I am sure that the new generation of writers will take it to greater heights, the Lt Governor added. The Lt Governor also spoke on the efforts to promote local languages including Kashmiri, Pahari, Gojri, Dogri, Punjabi. The UT Government is committed to provide the right platform to harness the potential of talented young writers of Jammu Kashmir, said the Lt Governor. Referring to the Jammu & Kashmir's Film Policy launched last year, the Lt Governor observed that the policy has facilitated the shooting of films in the picturesque locations across UT and the Bollywood's golden era of 70s-80s is making a comeback. The administration has started cinema halls in Shopian, Pulwama, Srinagar and

efforts are afoot to start cinema halls in every district. Record 1.60 crore tourists had come to Jammu and Kashmir till September this year, which in itself is testament of a vibrant Jammu Kashmir, added the Lt Governor. Dr Bibek Debroy, author, and Chairman, Economic Advisory Council to Prime Minister, spoke on the literary, cultural and historical legacy of Kashmir. He also threw light on the Kashmir and the Sharda Peeth connection. Sh Rahul Rawail, veteran Filmmaker expressed his happiness to witness the glorious days of film making back in Kashmir. Asha Batra, co-founder Kumaon Literary Festival, said that we are delighted to organise the Kashmir edition of the Kumaon Literary Festival. She also expressed gratitude to the UT government for its support to the festival. Arhan Bagati, Founder, Kashmir's Yumberzal Applied Research Institute (KYARI), in his welcome address highlighted the objectives and vision behind the fest. P K Pole, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Sh. Mohammad Aijaz, DC Srinagar; besides eminent personalities of literary field & Film world, litterateurs, thinkers, writers, artists from across the country and UT were present.

## SSP Kulgam flags off students for Bharat Darshan Tour-2022

JD/ JUNAID DAR KULGAM, OCT 19

As a part of Civic Action Programme of J&K Police, students of District Kulgam were flagged off for week long Bharat Darshan Tour-2022 (2nd Edition). The tour is organized by Kulgam Police and all boarding & lodging facilities, to & fro air tickets including all other logistic facilities are being provided by Kulgam police. An impressive flag-off ceremony was organized at DPL Kulgam in which SSP Kulgam with DySP HQR Kulgam, DySP DAR Kulgam and other senior officer of J & K Police participated. SSP Kulgam, while interacting with selected youth who belongs to different parts of district Kulgam, said that Bharat Darshan tour is primarily aimed at providing opportunity to the youth of the district to understand the togetherness of India inspite of immense diversity and advised them to avail the opportunity to enrich their knowledge by visit

## Upper reaches of Gulmarg receives fresh Snowfall, plains lashed rains in Valley

JD/ RAFIQ WANI BARAMULLA OCT 19

Some higher reaches of Kashmir valley including Affarwat in Gulmarg received light fresh snowfall while plains were lashed by rains resulting in cold weather conditions, here on Wednesday. An official said that around 2 inches of fresh snow accumulated at Affarwat, the hill towards the higher reaches of Gulmarg with the precipitation expected to drop in the next 24 hours. The Meteorological (MeT) office said that light rain is likely during the next 24 hours in Jammu and Kashmir. Weather was partly cloudy in the union territory during the last 24 hours. Srinagar had 7, Pahalgam 4.5 and Gulmarg 2.2 degrees Celsius as the minimum temperature. Mughal Road in south Kashmir's Shopian district also received fresh snowfall along Pir ki Gali (PKG) prompting authorities to close the road connecting Kashmir with Poonch-Rajouri districts in Jammu region.

## HDFC Bank opens Digital Banking Units in 4 districts as part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrations

JD/ FIRDOUS ELAHI SRINAGAR, OCT 19

HDFC Bank announced opening of Digital Banking Units (DBUs) in four districts as part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrations. These units are in Haridwar, Chandigarh, Faridabad and South 24 Parganas, West Bengal. These are a part of the 75 DBUs inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi across India. HDFC Bank has opened the four units as a part of the Union Government's initiative to take digital banking to every nook and corner of the country. The setting up of these DBUs was announced by the Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman in the 2022 Budget speech. A DBU is a banking outlet with digital infrastructure for delivering banking products and services in self-service as well as assisted modes. It has a self-service zone for customer transactions using Interactive ATMs, Cash Deposit Machines, Interactive Digital Walls, Net Banking Kiosks / Video calls and Tab Banking. Most self-service mode, services are available round-the-clock all year round. The assisted zone in a DBU is manned by two bank staff. "We are pleased to open four Digital Banking Units as a part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrations as this enables Indians to transact digitally even in remote locations," said Arvind Vohra, Country Head-Retail Branch Banking, HDFC Bank.

## Army organises warm up matches for Women's T-10 Cricket Championship



JD/ PEERZADA ZUBAIR KUPWARA, Oct 19

In its continued efforts towards women empowerment and boosting the sports capabilities among the women in Kupwara Indian Army's Kupwara Terriers have Organised warm up matches for Kupwara Women's T-10 Cricket Championship 22 (2nd edition) for various teams of Kupwara. First edition of this Championship was played in 2021 in which a total of 90 players from 06 teams of Kupwara had participated.

Kupwara Women's T-10 Cricket Championship 22 is scheduled to be conducted from 28 Oct 22. This year the championship has gained more traction among the local girls and a total of 180 players from 12 different teams of Dist Kupwara are participating. In warm up matches played so far Ziddi Gujjer Warsun have defeated Ghazir Guzeriyal by 6 wickets. Another match was played between Aabid Institute Awoora and Boys High School Gulgam which was won by Aabid Institute Awoora by 7 runs. Rest of the warm up matches are

scheduled to be played in couple of days. The teams comprised of girls between the age group of 15 to 20. The players showed exceptional zeal and excitement. The participants thanked Kupwara Terriers for providing the girls this opportunity to showcase their talent. Indian Army is committed to engage, encourage, educate and empower the women of Kupwara by supporting their endeavours and provide them with an opportunity to showcase their talent and make a name for themselves, their community & state.

## Female employees accuse top health officer of 'sexual harassment, call him 'monster'

JD/ FIRDOUS ELAHI SRINAGAR, OCT 19

At least five female medical employees have accused a top health official managing the affairs of a district in Central Kashmir of sexual harassment and have sought stern action against him. These female complainants in a letter to the Principal Secretary Health and Medical Education Department J&K, a copy of which lies with the news agency Kashmir News Trust have alleged that the officer holding top post was forcing them to visit his office after 6 PM to get his signatures done on important files. The complainant in their letter has said that they belong to the medical profession and when they went to the office

chamber of the officer (name withheld) many times to get his signatures which are required for filing different forms regarding employment under different schemes, but unfortunately, he misbehaved with them, using very bad and unparliamentary language in the presence of many employees. "Sometimes he asked us to visit different clerks who demanded money and other favors from us which we can't even explain and sometimes he asked us to come to his office after 6 PM to get his signatures," the letter reads. They have alleged that the clerical staff of his office including the female employees informed them about his inhumane approach. "They told that he always fights

with everybody and uses derogatory and unparliamentary language against almost everybody." "They (clerical staff) advised us that he (officer) is a very powerful person and he can go to any extent and will ruin your career if you speak against him as everybody is fed up with him but nobody has the courage to speak against this monster but we decided to go against this brutal and shameless person, as he has not only humiliated us, passing personal comments forcing us indirectly to succumb before him through his clerks but also by telling to come to his office after 6 PM, so we request your good self to take stern action against this monster and the shameless person so that no other female who goes to his

office suffer any more for his vested interests," the letter from the complainants read. Meanwhile, sources told that an inquiry has been initiated against the said officer though he has already been attached for other bad reasons. Sexual harassment complaints in the Health Department are not uncommon. In past as well several females had come forward accusing top brass of such kind of harassment. Even a Minister from the Congress party in Jammu and Kashmir had to abdicate his chair after he was accused by a top female employee of sexual harassment. Some female employees levelled the same allegations against a couple of Directors from the Health Department in past.

## 4 dead in Ladakh road accident, ill-fated Jeep still untraceable

JD/ FIRDOUS ELAHI LEH, OCT 19

The Thar Jeep that skidded off the road near Khardungla Pass in Ladakh is still untraceable, police said on Wednesday. Four tourists from Delhi and UP were killed after the Jeep they were travelling in skidded off the road near Khardungla Pass and fell into 150 feet gorge. Three tourists from Delhi and one from UP were on board when the mishap occurred. Station House Officer Nubra Mr Stenzin told news agency Kashmir News Trust that the condition of the road had become slippery due to snowfall on Tuesday. "Efforts are on to trace the vehicle," he said adding that an FIR vide number 18/22 under section 379, 337 and 304A already stands registered at police station Nubra in this regard. The police officer said that all the four bodies were airlifted to their native states. He identified the deceased as Muhammad Feroz, Reyaz Ahmed and Azam Khan, all residents of New Delhi and Zeeshan Toufeeq of Muradabad UP.

# Prolonged delay in issuing building permission, allege Srinagar residents

JD/ FIRDOUS ELAHI SRINAGAR, OCT 19

Authorities in Srinagar are allegedly resorting to dilly dally tactics in issuing building permissions while authorities claim that all files with NOCs were cleared recently.

People from different areas of Srinagar living around Dal Lake told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), that since the government launched online permission to ease the issues faced by people but there is no clue about their cases.

They said that the government introduced the online system to provide relief to people so that they can submit all necessary documents online but it has added to their suffering as they are forced to visit the offices to check the status of their files.

It is taking months together to get permission as authorities are resorting to dilly dally tactics due to unknown reasons, they added. They said that for months they were waiting to get the permission so that they can carry out necessary construction work in good tempera-

ture but now winter has approached and people are still waiting for their permits. They urged the higher authorities to direct the concerned to provide building permission on a fast-track basis so that people won't suffer any-

more. Irfan Bahadur Collector and Secretary Lake Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA) Srinagar told KNO that there are several departments who have to provide no objection certificates (NOCs) for building per-

mission and it takes time. "We have a building permission authority headed by VC and there are many other departments and NOCs from these departments including revenue and town planning organization which sometimes takes time," he

said. According to him, all files with proper NOCs and other documents were cleared during a board meeting two weeks ago. "As few files come to our office, the board clears them within days," he said