

# JAMMU & KASHMIR

## Itoo visits Budgam victim's family

Expresses solidarity, assures full Government support

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS  
JAMMU, MAY 24

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo today visited the bereaved family in Budgam to express solidarity and condolences following the tragic incident that has shaken the area.

Interacting with the family members, the Minister conveyed deep sorrow over the unfortunate incident and assured them that the Government stands firmly with them during this difficult time.

She said that all possible assistance and support from the Government would be extended to the af-



fectured family.

Sakeena Itoo strongly condemned the incident and termed it highly unfortunate and unacceptable in a civilized society.

She emphasized that those involved in the act must be dealt with strictly in accordance with the law and called for exemplary punishment to the culprits.

MLA Pampore, Justice (Retd) Hasnain Masoodi and MLA Zainapora, Showkat Hussain Ganie also accompanied the Minister.

## CM Omar visits residence of MP Er Rashid, expresses condolences

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JAMMU, MAY 24

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today visited the residence of Member of Parliament Er Rashid and MLA Langate Khurshid Ahmed Sheikh to offer his heartfelt condolences on the demise of their father, Khizar Mohammad Sheikh, who passed away last week after a prolonged illness.

Khizar Mohammad Sheikh, 85, breathed his last at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi where he had been undergoing treatment.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by Minister Javid Ahmed Dar, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) Choudhary Mohammad Ramzaan, several legislators and other dignitaries.

During the visit, the Chief Minister spent time with



the bereaved family and expressed deep sorrow over the loss.

He offered words of comfort and solidarity to

the family members during this difficult time.

The Chief Minister prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul and ex-

pressed sympathy with the bereaved family, praying for strength and patience for them to bear the irreparable loss.

## Satish Sharma emphasizes youth empowerment to build drug-free J&K

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Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FS&CA), Information Technology, Transport, Youth Services & Sports, and Science & Technology, Satish Sharma, today emphasized youth empowerment, healthy lifestyle, sports culture and collective efforts to build a strong and drug-free Jammu and Kashmir.

He was addressing the students, teachers, parents and members of the school community at the annual prize distribution programme at JNV Jammu-II, Nardi-Bala.

The Minister underscored the role of educational institutions in shaping responsible citizens and nurturing the values of discipline, perseverance and leadership among the young minds.

Congratulating the students on their achievements, Satish Sharma said that educational institutions are not merely centers of academic excellence but nurseries where character, leadership and the future of society is shaped. He emphasized that true success extends beyond awards and recognition and lies in values such as perseverance, hard work and integrity.

Speaking about his personal journey and values, the Minister reflected on the lessons of discipline,



sacrifice and resilience learned from his roots. He stated that the strongest foundations of success are often built quietly through dedication and effort.

Addressing the young generation, Satish Sharma highlighted the importance of healthy living and urged the students to adopt nutritious and natural food habits.

He expressed concern over the growing influence of processed and unhealthy food choices among youth and stressed the need to reconnect with healthier lifestyle.

"A strong nation is built on healthy citizens. The choices young people make today regarding health and lifestyle will determine the future strength of our society," he said.

The Minister also praised the role of Scouts, Guides and youth development initiatives in shaping the responsible citizens. He noted that values such as discipline, teamwork and commitment cultivated through such platforms help prepare young minds for future leadership roles.

Expressing concern over the growing challenge of substance abuse, Satish Sharma strongly advocated sports and youth engagement as powerful tools to combat the drug menace. He emphasized that sports instill discipline, focus and purpose among young people and can become a strong shield against social evils.

"Sports grounds, classrooms and creative spaces must become centers of as-

piration for our youth. A child engaged in sports learns resilience, determination and the value of hard work," he remarked.

The Minister reiterated government's commitment to expand opportunities for youth participation in sports and constructive activities across Jammu and Kashmir.

Congratulating the students who received awards, Satish Sharma encouraged them to continue striving for excellence while motivating others to remain determined and work hard towards achieving their goals.

The event also featured cultural performances and participation from school staff, parents and students, creating an atmosphere of celebration and inspiration.

## Punjab & Sind Bank Employees Union Holds Triennial Conference in Jammu

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Punjab & Sind Bank Employees Union (PSBEU), Jammu & Kashmir, affiliated with the All India Bank Employees Association, held its Triennial Conference in Jammu on Saturday with participation of delegates and observers from various bank branches across the region.

The conference was attended by around 20 delegates and observers besides representatives from different bank unions and the Jammu Province Bank Employees Federation (JPBEF). The event was inaugurated by veteran bank employees' leader SPS Virk.

The inaugural session was presided over by Shashank Raina. Union leaders felicitated the chief guest and other dignitaries, including Jagpreet Singh, Arun Kumar Gupta and Tara Singh.

Welcoming the partici-



pants, General Secretary Avtar Singh highlighted the importance of collective efforts for safeguarding the interests of bank employees and strengthening the public banking sector.

Addressing the gathering, SPS Virk spoke on the socio-economic situation in the country and stressed the role of the banking employees' movement in protecting public sector banks. He criticised policies aimed at privatisation of public sector banks and called

upon the working class to remain united for safeguarding the banking sector. The session was also addressed by Arun Kumar Gupta, who assured full support from JPBEF to the union in Jammu and Kashmir.

During the delegate session, Avtar Singh presented the General Secretary's Report, detailing the union's activities during the previous term. The report was discussed and passed unanimously by the delegates.

Treasurer Mukesh Sharma also presented the statement of accounts, which was approved unanimously.

Later, the new office bearers of the union were elected unanimously. Mukesh Sharma was elected President, Pooja Mehta as Vice-President, Avtar Singh as General Secretary, Chand Raj, Kulbhushan Sharma and Geeta as Assistant Secretaries, while Pranav Kandhari was elected Treasurer.

## LG Ladakh launches ambitious Ecological Project to reclaim 800 acres of barren land

**LEH, MAY 24:** In the wake of an unprecedented pace of land degradation in Ladakh, turning vast expanses of fertile land into barren cold deserts, Lieutenant Governor of UT Ladakh, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, has taken up an ambitious project of reversing land degradation and revitalising them into fertile ecosystems.

On the directions of L-G Shri Saxena, nearly 800 acres of barren land have been identified near Spituk village in Leh, for the innovative pilot project. This land has been lying barren for hundreds of years. Under this project, the unutilised or excess water from the adjoining Igoo - Phey irrigation Canal, which was recently restored and operationalized by the L-G, is being spread over this land by creating temporary channels and minor earthwork interventions using tractors and other machinery.

With less than 100 mm of annual rainfall, Ladakh relies heavily on glacial meltwater for survival. But the glacial meltwater, in the early Springs, flows too fast for the soil to absorb enough moisture, causing soil erosion down the valleys and triggering an immediate drop in groundwater recharge and soil moisture, transforming



agricultural fields into arid, dusty wastelands.

The idea behind this project is to fundamentally alter the local ecosystem using freshwater and kickstart a transformation - from a degraded environment to a productive one.

Letting freshwater sit and percolate, will recharge the depleted groundwater, triggering the growth of natural vegetation, and can enable sustainable agriculture or afforestation. Instead of employing complex, energy and cost-intensive solutions that would only put additional burden on Ladakh's fragile ecosystem, Shri Saxena has resorted to simple and hyper-local freshwater engineering, while ideating this project.

Freshwater discharge would restore the degraded land by flushing out toxic

salts, rehydrating parched subsoils, and dissolving essential nutrients for plant absorption. This initiative aims at achieving a mix of immediate and long-term benefits, including:

**Ecological Transformation & Groundwater Recharge:** By allowing the fresh water to sit and percolate in the soil, depleted aquifers will be replenished. This will raise the local water table, creating a reliable water source in the surrounding areas.

**Vegetation Growth:** Barren soils contain dormant seeds that will quickly germinate, when exposed to moisture. Grasses and hardy shrubs are the first to emerge, followed by larger plants, over the period of time.

**Soil Binding:** Once fresh water allows native vegetation to take root, their newly

grown roots, bind the loose, dry soil together, protecting it from wind and water erosion, which primarily cause land degradation.

**Soil Desalinization:** Flushing barren or heavily salinized soil with fresh water helps wash harmful salts and minerals, deeper into the ground, away from the surface root zones. This would further revitalize the soil and boost the growth of vegetation.

**Agricultural & Economic Potential:** With restored soil moisture and a reliable source of irrigation, the barren/degraded land can be converted for crop cultivation or livestock grazing.

"This initiative is expected to become a model for sustainable irrigation expansion, improved agricultural productivity and ecological restoration across Ladakh. Nearly 800 acres of barren land are being watered using the excess water from Igoo-Phey Canal, for increasing the moisture content in the soil and triggering a process of natural rejuvenation of the soil," said LG- Shri Saxena. The initiative is aligned with Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi's call for restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.

## Army organises medical camp in Poonch

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS  
JAMMU, MAY 24

The Indian Army conducted a Medical Camp at Upper Gunthal Panchayat with the aim of providing essential primary healthcare services to the residents of Gunthal and nearby villages of Poonch. The camp was organised to address the healthcare needs of people living in remote areas where poor road connectivity and limited access to medical facilities continue to pose major challenges in obtaining timely treatment and medical assistance. Special focus was laid on reaching out to the Gujjar and Bakkarwal communities residing in the region.

During the camp, general health check-ups were conducted and free medicines were distributed among the villagers. The initiative aimed to promote the



health and well-being of the local population by ensuring accessible and timely healthcare services.

The villagers expressed heartfelt gratitude towards the Indian Army for the care, support and medical

assistance provided during the camp.

The initiative was widely appreciated by the local population and further strengthened the bond between the Army and the people.

The overwhelming participation of locals reflected the success of the medical camp and highlighted the Indian Army's continued commitment towards community welfare and nation-building efforts.