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Terrorists gun down...

On Saturday, terrorists shot dead Majid Ahmad Gojri, a resident of Chattabal Srinagar, at Karan Nagar. Later that night, another civilian Mohammad Shafi Dar, resident of Batamaloo, was shot at and injured at SD Colony Batamaloo. He succumbed to injuries a few hours later.

Supinder Kaur, a Srinagar-based Sikh, and Chand, a Hindu from Jammu, were killed two days after The Resistance Force, a shadow outfit of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba, claimed responsibility for the deaths of three people on Tuesday.

Makhwan Lal Bindroo, a prominent Kashmiri Pandit and owner of Srinagar's most famous pharmacy, was shot dead at his shop that evening. Minutes later, a chaat' vendor, Virender Paswan from Bihar, was gunned elsewhere in the city. Almost simultaneously, another civilian, Mohammad Shafi Lone, was killed at Naidkhai in Bandipora.

Three days before that, terrorists shot dead Majid Ahmad Gojri, at Srinagar's Karan Nagar locality. Later that Saturday night, they gunned down Mohammad Shafi Dar at Batamaloo.

For many people in the Valley, the spate of civilian killings -- the worst since Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370 was revoked in August 2019 -- recalled the 1990s when terrorists would pick and choose their targets at whim. This led to the exodus of minorities, particularly Kashmiri Pandits, from the Valley.

"The incidents of targeting civilians in Kashmir since a few days are barbaric. Innocent people who are working for society and have nothing to do with anyone are being targeted. This is an attempt to create an atmosphere of fear and to give it a communal colour so as to damage communal harmony in Kashmir," DGP Singh said.

"We regret the back-to-back attacks in which civilians have been killed. We are working on the previous cases. The Srinagar police has got many clues and we will soon get the people behind such terror and barbaric attacks...," he said.

Describing the killings as a conspiracy to target those who have come here to earn their bread and butter, he expressed the hope that the people of Kashmir would not let the conspiracy succeed.

"We will work together and defeat their purpose," he said.

As he spoke, the buzz of media crews and the sirens of police jeeps that zoomed into the school punctured the stunned silence that had fallen over the staff. His assurances seemed to have little impact on the groups of teachers and others who roamed around, almost aimlessly as it were, trying to come to terms with the events of the morning.

They listened on blankly, as if nothing was registering. Scared of being identified or being caught on camera, some teachers murmured that they were unaware of what happened and rushed out of their classroom only after hearing gunshots.

They refused to give their names and drifted away when questioned further.

The area near the school was cordoned off.

"I wonder where we are heading, asked a teacher in hushed tones.

That was the answer many were seeking.

According to IGP Vijay Kumar, as many as 28 civilians, including seven from minority communities and two non-local Hindus, have been killed by terrorists in Kashmir this year.

"Due to killing of huge numbers of terrorists of all outfits specially their leadership, destruction of their support structures and continuous and effective maintenance of law and order, terrorist handlers across are frustrated and have changed their strategy and started targeting unarmed policemen, innocent civilians, politicians and now innocent civilians from minority communities including women," he said in a statement.

"In all such cases, terrorists have been using pistols. These acts are committed by newly recruited terrorists or those who are about to join terrorist rank. In some cases, OGWs have been found directly involved," he added.

Kumar said police are identifying all such part-time or hybrid terrorists and strictest action will be taken against them.

Will give befitting...

J&K UT. My deepest condolences to the bereaved family, friends and colleagues," he added.

The two teachers were shot dead by terrorists inside their school at Sangam in the Eidgah area of the city on Thursday.

The killing of the teachers took the number of civilians killed in the last five days in the Kashmir Valley to seven, including four from the minorities.

Never imagined I...

event at AIIMS Rishikesh, Modi said on this day 20 years ago, he got the responsibility of serving the public.

Modi completed 20 years as the head of a government, including over 13 years as Gujarat chief minister, on Thursday, with top BJP leaders lauding his leadership and crediting him for ushering in good governance and development.

"My journey to serve the people had begun many decades ago but 20 years ago, I got a new responsibility as the chief minister of Gujarat," he said addressing a gathering here.

He served as Gujarat CM between 2001 and 2014.

Modi said coincidentally, Uttarakhand was formed on November 9, 2000 and his journey began a few months later in 2001.

"I had never imagined that as the head of the government, I would become the chief minister and then the prime minister of the country," he said.

The prime minister expressed happiness that he is beginning his 21st year of service at a place which has given him constant affection and support.

"After visiting this land of Himalayas, my resolve to serve the people has become stronger. New PSA oxygen plants were inaugurated across the country from a place which has given a solution to make life healthy with the help of yoga and ayurveda," he said. Modi said Uttarakhand has been 'tapobhoomi' of saints and seers, and has always attracted people from all over the world.

He said the state has played a big role in changing the course of life of many people like him.

Protests in Jammu...

Sena leader Ashok Gupta said.

The Rashtra Bajrang Dal and the VHP also protested the civilian killings.

Several organisations representing the Kashmiri Pandit community held protests too.

Those who perpetrated...

central government has completely failed to provide security," Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

Shocking news coming in again from Srinagar. Another set of targeted killings, this time of two teachers in a Govt school in Idgah area of the city. Words of condemnation are not enough for this inhuman act of terror but I pray for the souls of the deceased to rest in peace, added National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah on Twitter.

Peoples Democratic Party Mehboba Mufti said it was disturbing to see the deteriorating situation in Kashmir where a minuscule minority is the latest target. "GOI's claims of building a Naya Kashmir has actually turned it into a hellhole. Its sole interest is to use Kashmir as a milch cow for its electoral interests, she wrote on Twitter.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan expressed shock at the "cowardly" killings", saying these attacks on innocent civilians by the radicals not only exposes the hollowness of their beliefs, it also reveals the boiling frustrations of their masters across the border due to the normalcy in the valley. Perpetrators of terror will be dealt with an iron hand," the minister tweeted.

"Extremely shocked to hear about the cowardly killing of the principal and teacher of Govt. Boys Higher Secondary School and other civilians in Srinagar, #Kashmir by forces of terror," the minister said.

Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said the government will smoke the perpetrators "out of their holes and hold them accountable".

The Union minister for minority affairs said evil forces will not be allowed to hijack the atmosphere of peace and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir.

"It is very unfortunate," he told reporters. "The people of J-K want development and not terrorism. Those people who are trying to put a speed breaker on the path of J-K's development through terrorism will not succeed."

Naqvi, who is on a visit to Budgam district in central Kashmir as part of the Centre's outreach programme for J-K, said evil forces will not be allowed to succeed in their "nefarious designs to hijack" the atmosphere of peace and prosperity in Jammu-Kashmir through terrorism and violence.

"The minorities here will remain protected. It is our national duty to protect them. Those who are doing it (attacking civilians and minorities), we will smoke them out of their holes and hold them accountable," he said.

Jammu and Kashmir Congress condemned the targeted killings of civilians in the Valley and asked the Centre to ensure the safety of the people, especially minorities.

JKPCC chief spokesperson Ravinder Sharma, vice president Raman Bhalla, general secretaries Yogesh Sawhney and Thakur Mamnoon Singh in a joint statement strongly condemned the gruesome killings of the two school teachers.

"It is very unfortunate and highly condemnable and has caused sense of insecurity and fear in the minds of innocent civilians, especially minority community and non-normals," Sharma said.

"The government must wake up to the situation and ensure the safety and security of the innocent people, especially the minority community who are feeling more unsafe now," Sharma said.

The series of selective killings has created fear among the people especially the minorities and others including the PM Package employees, he said.

"The situation is alarming and reverting towards 1990s, Sharma said.

Bharatiya Janata Party's J&K spokesperson Altaf Thakur said the killing of unarmed teachers who have nothing to do with politics is purely an inhuman act.

He said the cowardly act deserves the highest form of condemnation.

Killing of unarmed civilians can never be justified as no religion allows to kill innocents, the BJP spokesperson added.

According to CPI(M) leader Mohammed Yousuf Tarigami, the spree of killings had shocked Kashmiri society. "Kashmiri Pandits and Sikhs are part and parcel of the local shared history, and cultural ethos. Protecting the pluralistic visage of J&K must be the top agenda of every Kashmiri," he said in a statement.

J&K High Court Bar Association Jammu, during a meeting held under the Chairmanship of its President, Senior Adv M K Bhardwaj, condemned repeated incidents of brutal killing in Kashmir by terrorists in last few days. The meeting was attended by all office-bearers besides a number of other members of Association.

Speaking on the occasion, Bhardwaj condemned Pakistan sponsored terrorism for carrying on the policy of enmity against India and harboring terrorism on its soil and using the same to threaten people & security forces in the Union Territory. J&K High Court Bar Association Jammu has taken a very serious view of the killings of innocent people and has called upon the Government to take stern action against anti-national forces as well as against Pakistan to prevent similar acts in future. J&K High Court Bar Association further decided to abstain from work on 8th October, 2021 and to hold protest at 12.30 PM against terrorist activities in Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

Bharatiya Janata Party (J&K) has also condemned the recent spurt in terror attacks in Kashmir to selectively hit soft targets. Chief Spokesperson Sunil Sethi, in press release, noted that such terror attacks are being carried out at a time when peace has finally returned to Valley and there is high inflow of tourists and investors, particularly in Kashmir region.

Stressing that the nefarious designs of the terrorists and their promoters will never be successful, J&K BJP General Secretary (Org) Ashok Kaul also condemned the barbaric act saying that killings are aimed to disturb the ongoing peace and development process in the Union Territory.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad Jammu Kashmir & Ladakh unit also condemned the inhuman, barbaric terrorist act of killing of Sikh Principal Supinder Kaur and teacher Deepak Chand in broad daylight. In an emergency meeting at Jammu, chaired by Rajesh Gupta, Prant Karyadhyaksh and attended by State Secretary Abhishek Gupta, Vice President Shakti Dutt Sharma, Bajrang Dal Chief Kartik Soodan and other state officers, the participants conveyed their sympathies with the bereaved families and resolved to fight terrorism.

Sikh United Front J&K also condemned the terrorist attack on two teachers. During a meeting held under the chairmanship of Sudershan Singh Wazir, Chairman Sikh United Front J&K said that killing of teachers is a cowardice attack which drew widespread condemnation. It is an attempt to defame local Muslims of Kashmir, he added.

Jammu & Kashmir Teachers Association (JKTA), Jammu led by its President, Bhupinder Singh and Vice President, Joginder Digras also condemned brutal killing of a Principal and a Teacher posted in Govt Boys Higher Secondary School in Kashmir. JKTA demanded protection of all teachers who are serving in valley and justice for the families members of departed souls.

All J&K Plus 2 Officers Association (Regd) in an emergent meeting under the Chairmanship of its President Dr Prithvi Paul Raina also condoled demise of a Principal and a Teacher in Srinagar. The Association urged Govt to arrest the culprits and put them behind the bars for ensuring safe and secure environment in entire UT.

J&K UT President of Hindustan Shiv Sena (HSS) Vikrant Kapoor also condemned the brutal attack on civilian in Srinagar. Terming it as a conspiracy to stop process of return of Kashmiri Hindus and Sikhs to the Valley, he demanded stern action against the culprits.

People in J&K have awakened against violence in Kashmir and are giving a befitting reply to terrorists and their activities, which is why the frustrated anti-national elements are targeting innocent civilians on selective basis just to show their presence. It was stated by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) J&K Executive Member Raman Suri, while condemning recent terror attacks in valley on civilians.

Mula Ram former minister and Vice President JKPCC along with Hari Singh Chib President DCC Jammu Rural also condemned the government for not doing enough to provide security to common man in the Valley. The senior Congress leader said that the government should act tough and nab the perpetrators of the terror in Valley to teach them a lesson of life.

Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) Jammu Kashmir condemned the brutal killings of principal and a teacher at a government School in Srinagar, who were shot dead by terrorists. ABVP Jammu Kashmir State Secretary Mukesh Manhas said that there is need to completely eliminate terrorism from Jammu & Kashmir.

Sikh Progressive Front also condemned barbaric killing of two teachers and other recent attacks on minority community members in Kashmir. In a meeting held under leadership of its President, Balvinder Singh, the forum extended heartfelt condolences and sympathies with bereaved families and demanded stern action against the terrorists.

During an emergency meeting of Employees Joint Action Committee (EJAC) held under the chairmanship of Yash Paul Sharma, the participants condemned brutal killings of Govt employees by terrorists and urged Lt Governor of J&K UT to immediately provide security cover to all employees who are performing their legitimate duty in J&K UT.

Among others those attended the condolence meeting were Darshan Mangotra, Sanjay Abrol, Subash Chander, Jeet Raj, Rajesh Kumar, Ravi Kumar Sharma, Kuldeep Raj, Kewal Krishan, Babu Ram, Yash Pal Yogi, Sanjay Kumar, Satish Kumar, Hardeep Singh and Jeet Raj Sharma.

'Please watch your...

"Please watch your October, November, December."

While overall COVID-19 positivity across the country gives comfort, Agarwal pointed out that there are still a large number of districts reporting high case positivity.

He said five states -- Mizoram, Kerala, Sikkim, Manipur and Meghalaya -- are reporting a weekly positivity rate of more than five per cent.

Thirty-four districts across nine states and union territories are reporting a weekly positivity rate of more than 10 per cent, while 28 districts across 12 states and UTs are reporting a weekly positivity rate between 5 and 10 per cent, he informed.

Surge in cases globally aggravates the ongoing concern related with COVID-19 management, Agarwal said, adding around 4.54 lakh cases are being reported on an average daily globally.

Stating there has been global evidence of surge followed by unhindered public gatherings at various events in the UK, Russia and the Netherlands, Agarwal advised people to avoid crowded places and unnecessary travel and to stay home, celebrate festivals virtually and explore online modes of shopping.

Sustained efforts by the community is the key for successful pandemic management, he said.

Paul said, "In three months -- October, November and December -- we will take the vaccination forward. This is our aim. We saw that when in other countries...complacency was observed it led to paying a high price."

In the US, still 1,500-2,000 daily cases are being reported, he said.

"If we compare it with our population then it is 300 per million and if it was 333 then it would have been as many as the second peak seen in India. This shows that we cannot take any risk in this delta variant times. If we look at the UK then there are more than 40,000 cases per day and their population is just 7 crore...the infection is spreading at more intensity there than our second wave," Paul said.

Lastly, some states have a 21 per cent positivity rate and 1,000 cases in a small state like Mizoram are worrying, he highlighted.

The tools of tackling it are known -- testing, tracking, treatment and vaccination.

"We are in touch with them to bring the situation under control but it shows that some geographies can be there where behaviour of pandemic is different from that of the rest of the country.

"In Kerala too the positivity (rate) is 13.72 per cent, which is very high and more than 60 per cent cases are coming from there so we are together trying to control the pandemic and there is a need to bring more intensity into it," he said.

The government said that Kerala recorded 50 per cent of the total coronavirus cases in the country last week.

Kerala has over lakh active cases currently and the figure in four other states is ranging between 10,000 and 50,000.

The government said 71 per cent of India's adult population have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, while 27 per cent have got both doses.

On Zydus Cadila's vaccine roll-out, Paul said preparations are going on for it and required training is moving forward at various levels.

"...this vaccine is administered not conventionally using a syringe and a needle but with an applicator and that will be used for the first time in the country and bringing that training to conclusion is a huge task and work in that direction is going on," he said.

Listing its preparations to tackle any surge in coronavirus infections, the government said 8.36 lakh hospital beds are currently available in the country for COVID-

19 patients, in addition to nearly one million isolation beds in dedicated care centres.

It said 4.86 oxygen-supported beds and 1.35 lakh ICU beds are also available.

Paul said, "The dynamics of the virus after vaccination and infection which can lead to herd immunity...we do not have a straight formula for that. As one can see, despite the administration of vaccines, cases are being reported and we are still learning. The preparation will be of the level to make us safe. We move with preparation of 4.5 to 5 lakh cases per day surge, but it does not mean that it will happen, should happen or may happen."

Paul further said there is no issue of vaccine availability in the country now.

With 22,431 people testing positive for coronavirus infection in a day, India's total tally of COVID-19 cases rose to 3,38,94,312, according to the Union Health Ministry's data updated on Thursday.

The death toll climbed to 4,49,856 with 318 fresh fatalities, according to the data updated at 8 am.

134 fresh COVID...