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Kathua encounter: Body of fourth cop sighted, SFs resume anti-terror ops



■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The body of another policeman was sighted using a drone on Friday near the spot where a gunfight took place earlier in a remote forested area in Kathua district, officials said.

This is the fourth cop to have martyred in the gunfight in which three terrorists are also confirmed to have been killed, officials said.

Heavy firing and deafening sounds of explosions continued for the second day as police assisted by the Army and CRPF moved this morning from different directions, after a night halt to sanitise

the Saffyan area, they said.

On Thursday, three suspected Pakistani terrorists of proscribed Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit and an equal number of policemen were found dead after the day-long gunfight while one policeman was reported missing. Seven others, including a Deputy Superintendent of Police, were injured in the gunbattle.

The officials said the security forces resumed the operation with the first light of the day, having the primary focus to retrieve the bodies

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LG, CM pay tributes to policemen martyred in Kathua encounter

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday paid rich tributes to the police personnel who lost their lives in an ongoing encounter in Kathua district.

"I bow to the valorous martyrs of J&K Police, who laid down their lives for our motherland. My deepest condolences to their families," the Lt Governor said in a post on X.

In the ongoing encounter, he said several terrorists were neutralised.

"J&K Police & Security Forces are on the job. Operation in progress," the post, shared by the office of the Lt Governor, said. Abdullah also condoled the death of the policemen.

"Pride and grief intertwine as

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India not just nation of dreams but also one that delivers: Modi

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: India's foreign policy earlier was about maintaining an equal distance from all nations but now, it is of "equi-closeness", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday and asserted that the country's efforts, innovations and opinions are valued in the world today like never before.

Modi also said India is not just participating in the world order now but also contributing to shaping and securing its future.

Speaking at the TV9 Summit on the theme of "What India Thinks 'Today'",



Modi said, "Today, India is not just a nation of dreams but also a nation that delivers."

Taking an apparent swipe at opposition parties for their criticism of probe agencies

like the Enforcement Directorate (ED), he said those who looted public money have had to return it. "The ED is being abused day and night.... But it

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Earthquake rocks Myanmar, Thailand; kills more than 150 people

■ AGENCY

BANGKOK: A powerful earthquake rocked Myanmar and neighbouring Thailand on Friday, destroying buildings, a bridge and a dam. At least 144 people were killed in Myanmar, where photos and video from two hard-hit cities showed extensive damage. At least 10 died in the Thai capital, where a high-rise under construction collapsed.

The full extent of death, injury and destruction was not immediately clear - particularly in Myanmar, one of the world's poorest countries. It is embroiled in a civil

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Centre hikes DA/DR by 2 pc points for employees, pensioners

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet on Friday increased the Dearness Allowance (DA) by 2 percentage points effective from January 1 this year, benefitting nearly 1.15 crore central government employees and pensioners.

The Union Cabinet has approved the release of an additional instalment of Dearness Allowance (DA) to central government employees and Dearness Relief (DR) to pensioners with effect from January 1, 2025, representing an increase of 2 per cent over the existing rate of 53 per cent of

■ CONTD ON PAGE 9

Call for qualified leadership in Health Services Jammu Qualified Doctors from Medical Education can serve in Health Services

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Department of Health and Medical Education in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, supervised by a single Administrative Secretary and Minister, plays a crucial role in delivering healthcare services. A key position within the department is that of the Director of Health Services (DHS) Jammu, responsible for administering and overseeing healthcare institutions. Experts emphasize that the appointment to this role must prioritize merit, experience, and relevant

qualifications to ensure effective patient care.

Healthcare professionals assert that the DHS position should be filled by doctors holding a degree in Hospital Administration, coupled with extensive experience in managing health institutions as Hospital Administrators or Medical Superintendents. Appointing unqualified individuals without requisite experience to this critical post could compromise healthcare services for the public, particularly for underprivileged communities.

Concerns have been raised on social media regarding an apparent restriction on qualified and senior doctors from the Medical Education Department serving in Health Services Jammu. Notably, while many medical officers from Health Services Jammu continue to hold key positions within the Medical Education Department-such as Medical Superintendent posts at Government Medical College Hospital, Bone & Joint Hospital, State Cancer Institute, and various new medical

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Ahead of Navratri, AI-enabled cameras, drones, security personnel tighten security in Katra

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KATRA: Heavy security arrangements, including AI-enabled CCTV cameras and drones, are being put in place to avert any untoward incident at Mata Vaishno Devi shrine during the Navratri festival.

Chaitra (spring) Navratri will commence on March 30 and authorities are anticipating a large crowd of devotees thronging the cave shrine during the nine-day festival.

These measures become all the more crucial following a fierce encounter with suspected Pakistani terrorists in the Kathua district, resulting in the killing of three terrorists and four policemen. The operation began early Thursday and was ongoing at the time of the latest reports.

Conducting a security audit of Katra, the base camp of the cave shrine, Reasi SSP Paramvir Singh said, "Security has been significantly strengthened...(we)



assure all devotees arriving from various parts of the country that they will be provided with adequate security."

"We have conducted security checks at several locations in Katra town and are planning additional deployments at

strategic locations," he added.

Further, joint teams of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and police, along with quick reaction teams, have been deployed and remain vigilant, the SSP informed. ■ CONTD ON PAGE 9

DGP's stern warning to terror groups: Won't rest till they're not dealt with appropriately

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: In a stern warning to Pakistan-based terror groups operating in Jammu and Kashmir, Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat on Friday said his force would not sleep or take rest as long as India's impure neighbour (Pakistan) and its (terror) organisations were not dealt with appropriately.

Talking to reporters after leading the wreath-laying ceremony of three police personnel who laid down their lives fighting Pakistani terrorists at district police lines in Kathua, the DGP said their loss will not be compensated by words but by deeds.

He said four police personnel and two Pakistani terrorists were martyred in the ongoing operation in the remote Ghati Juthana forest area of Rajbagh and it was the same group of terrorists



DGP Nalin Prabhat, ADGP CPRF Rajesh Kumar, ADGP Anand Jain carrying coffin of a cop martyred at Kathua encounter.

who were intercepted by police in Saniyal village near the International Border in Hiranagar sector on March 23 evening.

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PM's 'Vande Bharat' will demolish Pak ISI terror designs: Chugh "Kathua encounter will give more strength to SFs"

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: BJP National General Secretary Tarun Chugh, who is also the party incharge for J&K, on Friday said that terrorism would be decisively defeated in Jammu and Kashmir, and a new vision of progress envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is already gaining ground.

Paying his tribute to the

security personnel martyred during an encounter



in the Kathua belt, Chugh

said the Pakistan ISI has been making desperate efforts to disturb peace and progress in J&K but the dynamic vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to structure new development paths would go a long way to defeat the designs of ISI.

Chugh said soon the Prime Minister would be ushering in a new

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Strong winds: Several flights cancelled at Srinagar airport

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Several flights at the Srinagar airport were either cancelled, diverted or delayed due to strong winds, officials said.

They said 19 flights were cancelled, while two were diverted due to strong winds caused by steep pressure gradient. Several other flights were delayed, they added. Strong gusty winds blew in most parts

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