

## !! Continuations from Page 1 !! Kathua encounter: Body...

of the deceased, finding a missing policeman and neutralising any other threat. They said the joint security parties are moving cautiously to the targeted area as two more terrorists are believed holed up there. They were also presumed dead earlier but their bodies could not be sighted by the drones.

The operation, centred near Jakhole village in the Ghati Juthana area of Rajbagh, against the terrorists started around 8 am on Thursday amid intensified operations led by police against the ultras who had recently infiltrated from across the International Border in Hiranagar sector; the officials said.

However, it was not immediately clear whether it was the same group that had been evading an earlier cordon in Sanyal forest of Hiranagar or another batch of infiltrated terrorists.

Three terrorists were killed in the onslaught led by the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Jammu and Kashmir Police and assisted by the Army and CRPF.

Adding to the tension, five police personnel, including a Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), were reportedly trapped near the gunfight's location, adjacent to a rivulet concealed by dense foliage.

However, the SDPO -- a DSP rank officer -- was evacuated in an injured condition from the scene late Thursday evening, while three of his personal security officers were found dead while another body of a policeman was sighted this morning.

Besides the SDPO, three more policemen were admitted to Kathua hospital and their condition was stated to be stable. Two army personnel were also injured in the operation.

Earlier, a group of terrorists was intercepted on Sunday evening within a 'dhok', a local term for an enclosure in a nursery, in Sanyal village near the International Border with Pakistan in the Hiranagar sector.

A subsequent search operation, involving the police, army, NSG, BSF and CRPF, utilised advanced technical and surveillance equipment to track down and neutralize the terrorists.

Despite the massive search operation, the terrorists managed to escape the initial cordon, the officials said, adding it is assumed that the same group could have been possibly spotted near Jakhole, approximately 30 km from the initial encounter site.

The search teams discovered evidence on Monday, including four loaded magazines of M4 carbine, two grenades, a bulletproof jacket, sleeping bags, tracksuits, food packets, and materials for constructing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) near the Hiranagar encounter site.

The terrorists were moving through the forest area towards the Billawar side when a police party headed by a SDPO moved in after getting specific information but came under heavy firing, resulting in the day-long gunfight.

Reinforcements from the police, army, and CRPF were immediately deployed to the area, while the special forces of the army were also airdropped to neutralise the terrorists.

Police believe the terrorists infiltrated on Saturday, possibly via a ravine route or a newly constructed tunnel from across the border.

Director General of Police, Nalin Prabhat and Inspector General of Police (Jammu Zone) Bhim Sen Tuti have been overseeing the anti-terrorist operation from Kathua for the past four days, the officials said.

The People's Anti-Fascist Front, a proxy outfit of Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), claimed responsibility for the encounter.

Army's rising star corps, whose troops are involved in the operation, lauded the police personnel involved in the operation.

"Rising Star Corps salutes the valor & indomitable spirit of the brave (J&K) Police personnel who made the supreme sacrifice fighting valiantly during the ongoing OP (operation) Safiyan in Kathua. Their courage and dedication will always be remembered," the Army said in a post on X.

## LG, CM pay...

we remember Balwinder Singh Chib, Jaswant Singh, and Tariq Ahmed, who laid down their lives during an anti-terror operation in Kathua, Jammu & Kashmir," he said.

"My heartfelt condolences to their families. Their sacrifice in the line of duty will always be remembered. May the departed souls rest in peace, and heartfelt prayers for the swift recovery of those injured," the office of chief minister wrote on X.

Four police personnel were martyred and three terrorists killed in the encounter in a remote forested area of Kathua.

## DGP's stern warning...

"Neither the intention of J&K Police was weakened nor is our goal far away from us. Our goal is clear and so is the intention. There is no lack of passion as J&K Police is the only force in the country that is writing its bravery and sacrifice in golden words.

"We will not sleep or take rest as long as our impure neighbour (Pakistan) and its (terror) organisations are not dealt with appropriately. This war is going on and will continue. There will be no dilution in our intention," the police chief said.

Bodies of three policemen -- Balwinder Singh Chib, Jaswant Singh, and Tariq Ahmed -- were retrieved from the scene of the encounter on Friday evening and after post mortem were taken to District Police Lines Kathua where the DGP, Inspector General of Police, Jammu, Bhim Sen Tuti and other senior officers of Army, BSF, CRPF and the police paid floral tributes to them.

Former J-K BJP president Ravinder Raina and several other politicians also joined the wreath-laying ceremony.

Confirming that the terrorists holed up in Rajbagh are the same group of terrorists who were earlier interecepted in Hiranagar sector; the DGP said a small team of police comprising five members confronted the terrorists hiding in a nursery after getting information from the locals at Saniyal village on March 23.

"The Pakistani terrorists fled the scene leaving behind four carbine magazines, three Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), two grenades and other material. Reinforcements from the police, Army, CRPF and BSF rushed to the scene and a massive search was launched which continued for four days," he said.

After getting a fresh input, a search operation was launched on Wednesday evening and there was a fire-fight between the terrorists and one of the police parties on Thursday morning, he said.

Prabhat said two Pakistani terrorists were eliminated in the initial gunfight but when the police party was climbing the hill, the terrorists taking advantage of their dominating position martyred four brave jawans.

"You have seen the topography of the area, the caves, boulders and the dense forest. Our priority was to retrieve the bodies of our martyrs to perform their last rites and it was successfully done. The operation will continue and we are hopeful of completing it by tomorrow (Saturday) evening," he said.

## Strong winds: Several...

of the Valley over the last 24 hours. In some places, the winds caused damage to buildings and vehicles, officials said.

## PM's 'Vande Bharat'...

chapter in history of J&K by flagging Vande Bharat train from Delhi to Srinagar which would also see the world's highest bridge coming into operation.

He said the Pakistan ISI cannot disrupt the developmental vision of "Vande Bharat" and every attempt to infiltrate terrorists in J&K would be dealt with firmly. Chugh said ever since Article 370 has been abrogated there has been a manifold increase in the development and progress of the people. New jobs are being generated even as terrorism has been comprehensively replaced with a new era of tourism, he added.

## Earthquake rocks Myanmar...

war, and information is tightly controlled.

"The death toll and injuries are expected to rise," the head of Myanmar's military government, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing said as he announced on television that at least 144 people were killed and 730 others were injured in his country.

In Thailand, Bangkok city authorities said 10 people were killed, 16 injured and 101 missing from three construction sites, including the high-rise.

The 7.7 magnitude quake struck at midday, with an epicentre near Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city. Aftershocks followed, one of them measuring a strong 6.4 magnitude.

Photos from Myanmar's capital, Naypyidaw, showed rescue crews pulling victims from the rubble of multiple buildings used to house civil servants.

Myanmar's government said blood was in high demand in the hardest-hit areas. In a country where prior governments sometimes have been slow to accept foreign aid, Min Aung Hlaing said Myanmar was ready to accept assistance.

At the United Nations, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the world body is mobilizing to respond to Myanmar's appeal for international help.

But as images circulated of buckled and cracked roads, a collapsed bridge and a burst dam, there were concerns about how rescuers would even reach some areas in a country already enduring a humanitarian crisis.

"We fear it may be weeks before we understand the full extent of destruction caused by this earthquake," said Mohammed Riyas, the International Rescue

Committee's Myanmar director.

Bridge and monastery collapse and dam bursts in Myanmar

In Mandalay, the earthquake reportedly brought down multiple buildings, including the Ma Soe Yane monastery, one of the largest in the city, and damaged the former royal palace. A video posted online showed robed monks in the street, shooting their own video of the multistory monastery before it suddenly fell into the ground. It was not immediately clear whether anyone was harmed.

Christian Aid said its partners and colleagues on the ground reported that a dam burst in the city, causing water levels to rise in the lowland areas.

In the Sagaing region just southwest of the city, a 90-year-old bridge collapsed, and some sections of the highway connecting Mandalay and Myanmar's largest city, Yangon, were also damaged.

Yangon residents rushed out of their homes when the quake struck. In Naypyitaw, some homes stood partly crumbled, while rescuers heaved away bricks from the piles of debris. An injured man reclined on a wheeled stretcher, while another man fanned him in the heat.

In a country where many people already were struggling, "this disaster will have left people devastated," said Julie Mehigan, who oversees Christian Aid's work in Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

"Even before this heartbreaking earthquake, we know conflict and displacement has left countless people in real need," Mehigan said.

Myanmar's military seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, and is now involved in a bloody civil war with long-established militias and newly formed pro-democracy ones.

Government forces have lost control of much of Myanmar, and many places are incredibly dangerous or simply impossible for aid groups to reach. More than 3 million people have been displaced by the fighting and nearly 20 million are in need, according to the United Nations.

Bangkok building collapsed in a cloud of dust

In Thailand, a 33-story building under construction crumpled into a cloud of dust near Bangkok's popular Chatuchak market, and onlookers could be seen screaming and running in a video posted on social media. Vehicles on a nearby freeway came to a stop.

Sirens blared across the Thai capital's downtown as a rescuers streamed to the wreckage. Above them, shredded steel and broken concrete blocks, some stacked like pancakes, rose in a towering heap. Injured people were rushed away on gurneys, and hospital beds were also wheeled outside onto a sidewalk.

"It's a great tragedy," Deputy Prime Minister Suriya Juangroongruangkit said after viewing the site, adding that there was hope that there were still survivors.

The city's elevated rapid transit system and subway shut down.

While the area is prone to earthquakes, they are usually not so powerful and rarely are felt in the Thai capital. The greater metropolitan area is home to more than 17 million people, many of whom live in high-rise apartments.

Voranoot Thirawat, a lawyer working in central Bangkok, said his first indication that something was wrong came when she saw a light swinging back and forth. Then she heard the building creaking, and she and her colleagues fled down 12 flights of stairs.

"In my lifetime, there was no earthquake like this in Bangkok," she said.

Fraser Morton, a tourist from Scotland, was in one of Bangkok's many malls when the quake struck.

"All of a sudden, the whole building began to move. Immediately, there was screaming and a lot of panic," he said. Some people fled down upward-moving escalators, he said.

Nearby, Paul Vincent, a tourist visiting from England, recalled seeing a high-rise building swaying, water falling from a rooftop pool and people crying in the streets.

The US Geological Survey and Germany's GFZ centre for geosciences said the earthquake was a shallow 10 kilometres, according to preliminary reports. Shallower earthquakes tend to cause more damage.

Injuries reported in China

To the northeast, the earthquake was felt in China's Yunnan and Sichuan provinces and caused damage and injuries in the city of Ruili on the border with Myanmar, according to Chinese media reports.

Videos that one outlet said were shot by a person in Ruili showed building debris littering a street and a person being wheeled in a stretcher toward an ambulance.

The shaking in Mangshi, a Chinese city about 100 kilometers northeast of Ruili, was so strong that people couldn't stand, one resident told The Paper, an online media outlet.

## India not just...

has recovered more than Rs 22,000 crore. This money is being returned legally to those from whom it was looted," he said.

Noting that the world's eyes are on India, the prime minister highlighted that people around the globe are curious about the country.

He said India, which was the 11th-largest economy in the world after 70 years of independence, rose to occupy the fifth spot in a span of only seven-eight years.

Citing a report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Modi said India is the only major economy in the world that has doubled its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the last 10 years.

He further said the neo-middle class is beginning to witness a new life with dreams and aspirations, along with contributing to the economy and making it vibrant.

India has the world's largest youth population, Modi said, noting that the country's youngsters are rapidly becoming skilled, thereby accelerating innovation.

"India First has become the mantra of India's foreign policy.... India once followed a policy of maintaining an equal distance from all nations, of being equidistant. The current approach emphasises being equally close to all -- an equi-closeness policy," he said.

The prime minister underscored that the global community now values India's opinions, innovations and efforts like never before.

In his address, Modi also talked about India's vital role in global security, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Defying doubts, India developed its own vaccines, ensured rapid inoculation and supplied medicines to more than 150 countries, he said.

The prime minister said to address the challenge of natural disasters, which cause immense damage to infrastructure worldwide, India took the initiative to establish the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).

The CDRI represents a global commitment to strengthening disaster preparedness and resilience, he added.

Emphasising the importance of global collaboration to tackle future challenges, particularly in energy resources, Modi highlighted India's initiative of the International Solar Alliance as a solution to ensure sustainable energy access for even the smallest nations.

He highlighted the transformation from dependency to self-reliance, aspirations to achievements and desperation to development.

Modi recalled that 10 years ago, the issue of toilets in villages left women with limited options, but today, the Swachh Bharat Mission has provided a solution to their problem.

He said in 2013, discussions about healthcare revolved around expensive treatments but today, Ayushman Bharat offers a solution.

Similarly, he highlighted that the kitchens of the poor, once associated with smoke, now benefit from the Ujjwala Yojana.

The prime minister pointed out that in 2013, women often remained silent when asked about bank accounts, but today, more than 30 crore of them have their own bank accounts due to the Jan Dhan Yojana.

The world is recognising and accepting India's development model, he asserted. "India is no longer just a nation of dreams but a nation that delivers," Modi said.

He pointed out that online banking has reached every household and there is a banking touchpoint now within every five-kilometre radius in the country.

The prime minister said the government has not only expanded banking infrastructure but also strengthened the banking system.

Modi highlighted that the non-performing assets (NPA) of banks have significantly reduced and their profits have reached a record high of Rs 1.4 lakh crore.

He said those who looted public money are now being held accountable, adding that the ED has recovered more than Rs 22,000 crore and the money is being legally returned to the victims from whom it was taken.

Stressing that efficiency leads to effective governance, Modi highlighted the importance of achieving more in less time, utilising fewer resources and avoiding unnecessary expenditures.

He said the process of filing income-tax returns (ITR) is now much simpler and faster compared to earlier times.

Highlighting India's transformation in the last 10-11 years across every sector and field, Modi emphasised the significant shift in the mindset that has taken place.

He said for decades after independence, a mindset was promoted in India that considered foreign goods superior. He noted that shopkeepers would often sell their products by saying, "This is imported."

The prime minister emphasised that the situation has now changed and today, people are proactively asking, "Is this made in India?"

## Qualified Doctors from...

colleges-similar opportunities in Health Department are seemingly being denied to

experienced professionals from Medical Education.

Historically, deserving doctors from Medical Education have successfully served as Director Health Services Jammu, delivering exemplary healthcare services. Notable examples include Dr. Ved Gupta, Dr. Jasbir Singh, Dr. Mushtaq Rather, and Dr. Rakesh Khajuria, who effectively led the department and improved patient care standards.

It is also to mention that in the past couple of years the post of Director Health Services Jammu has been filled on adhoc basis and the incumbent officers served for a short tenure. Many experts say that as the post of Director Health Services Jammu is going to vacate, it is expected that the Government will take a decision in the interest of patient care and appoint a deserving, qualified and experienced Doctor from Health & Medical Education Department, who must have desirable tenure to serve, ignoring the misleading information that the Doctors from Medical Education cannot serve in Health Services inspite of his seniority, qualification and relevant experience.

## Centre hikes DA...

the basic pay/pension, to compensate against price rise, said Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw after the Cabinet meeting.

The combined impact on the exchequer on account of increase in both DA and DR would be Rs 6,614.04 crore per annum.

The move will benefit about 48.66 lakh central government employees and 66.55 lakhs pensioners.

The increase is in accordance with the accepted formula, which is based on the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission.

DA and DR is paid to adjust the cost of living and protect employees and pensions from inflation.

## Ahead of Navratri...

Deputy Inspector General of Police Rayees Mohd Bhat said thorough security arrangements have been made, including the deployment of drones, as part of the security measures.

Moreover, the track leading to the shrine is being closely watched by the CRPF.

Officials said that over 500-600 CCTV cameras equipped with advanced AI capabilities have been installed along the pilgrimage route.

The cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi is already witnessing increased footfall. "In the past few days, there has been a significant rise in the number of pilgrims.

Nearly 40,000 pilgrims visit the Mata Vaishno Devi temple daily, with numbers rising even further on weekends," said Anshul Garg, chief executive officer (CEO), SMVDSB.

He further said that the number is expected to only rise in the coming days.

On its part, the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) has built new infrastructure and arranged more facilities for the pilgrims during the festival from March 30 to April 7.

An all-weather covered resting area for 1,500 pilgrims at Ardhkuwari has been set up. The area will feature a water ATM, prasad kiosk, refreshment unit and live telecast of 'garbhjoon aarti'. Additionally, the renovated 'Darshani Deodi' with a double-storey queue complex is ready to welcome pilgrims this Chaitra Navratri, the Board said.

In view of recent terror incidents and the upcoming Eid and Navratri festivals, security has also been beefed up in Jammu city and along the highways, with increased vehicle checks and frisking of people.

## Vehicle loaded with illegal Khair Stumps, Twigs seized at Jandyal

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU The Forest Department today seized a vehicle carrying illegally extracted forest produce here at Jandyal village. "Acting on specific information, a team of the Forest Department, under the close supervision of the Range Officer (RO) Jammu, intercepted and seized a Mahindra Bolero vehicle (Reg No JK02AB 1915) at village Jandyal carrying minor forest produce without valid documents," an official hand-out stated. The vehicle was found loaded with 10 peeled Khair stumps and 12 Khair twigs, which were being transported in violation of the Indian Forest Act (IFA). The operation, it said, was executed at around 9:30 AM by Block Officer (BO) Manawar with the active assistance of police personnel and Beat Guard Showa. As per legal provisions, confiscation proceedings have been promptly initiated against the offenders. The seized vehicle and illicit forest produce have been taken into official custody for further legal action.

## Bovine smuggling bid foiled; 4 bovines rescued, vehicle seized

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SAMBA: Continuing its drive against bovine smugglers and their propagators, Samba Police on Friday foiled yet another bovine smuggling attempt in consecutive days in the jurisdiction of Police Post Goran of PS Samba and rescued four bovines. The vehicle used for illegal transportation of bovines was also seized.

"Information was received at Police Post Goran of PS Samba from reliable sources regarding smuggling of bovines in a Mahindra Bolero bearing registration No JK02BE-7921 from Dalote Khad, Goran," police spokesperson said.

Acting on information, spokesperson added, a police team headed by Incharge PP Goran intercepted the aforesaid Mahindra Bolero and during checking, four bovines found inside which were tied in a cruel manner and were being transported illegally without any valid permission. The bovines smugglers identified as Kali, son of Sobat Ali, resident of Palpad tehsil & district Jammu and Zahid Hussain, son of Shamir Hussain, resident of Narwal Bala Karyani Talab Bathaindi district Jammu have been arrested and all the bovines have been rescued. A case FIR No. 83/2025 U/S 223 BNS 11 PCA Act has been registered at PS Samba and investigation started, spokesperson said.

## Narcotic smuggler arrested with 7 gms herion-like substance

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

REASI: Continuing the drive against drug abuse launched by District Police Reasi, on Friday Patrolling party of Police Station Katra, while doing patrolling duty at circular road Katra, intercepted a person namely Kasturi Lal, son of Madan Lal, resident of Matyal, Tehsil Katra District Reasi. During frisking 07 grams of heroin along with packing material was recovered from his possession.

In this regard, a Case FIR No 86/2025 under Section 8/21/22 NDPS ACT was registered at P/S Katra and investigation initiated to unearth the forward and backward linkages. The operation led by SHO Katra Inspector Khyatimaan Khajuria under the supervision of SDPO Katra Dr Bhisham Dubey and SP Katra Vipran Chandran. Paramvir Singh, Senior Superintendent of Police Reasi, while sharing the details, conveyed that Reasi Police is working on multipronged strategy to deal with the problem of drug abuse, illicit liquor and will leave no stone unturned to curb this menace from the society.

## FIR registered against person for threatening locals with sharp weapon

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

REASI: Acting swiftly on credible information received from reliable sources, Police Station Katra registered a case against one individual for creating panic and threatening the safety of residents in the Matyal area of Katra, District Reasi.

As per police report, the accused identified as Vikas Sharma alias Viku Matrian, son of Lt. Bodh Raj Sharma, resident of Matyal, opposite Hotel Jagdish, Katra, was allegedly seen wandering around the Matyal locality, armed with a sharp weapon (Toka) and threatening the people in the area.

Upon receiving this information, a police team from P/S Katra immediately took cognizance of the matter and initiated action to ensure public safety.

On this regard, a case FIR No. 85/2025 under Section 4/25 Arms Act was registered at Police Station Katra and further investigation is underway.

## BCCI reschedules KKR vs LSG match to April 8, to be played in Kolkata

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KOLKATA: The BCCI on Friday rescheduled the IPL match between Kolkata Knight Riders and Lucknow Super Giants from April 6 to April 8 owing to Ramanavami festivities here. While the match will be played a couple of days later as against the original schedule, it will be held in Kolkata itself and not in Guwahati as earlier speculated. "The decision follows a request from Kolkata Police to the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) regarding the deployment of personnel across the city owing to festivities," the BCCI said in a press release. "The authorities have recommended that the game be moved to Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at 3:30 PM, and the request has been accommodated accordingly," it added.