

SUV evades checkpoint on NH, police fire 3 rounds

JAMMU: An SUV evaded a security checkpoint on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway in Ramban district early Friday, prompting police to open fire at it, officials said.

The driver subsequently abandoned the vehicle and fled, they said.

The incident took place around 3.30 am when the SUV was travelling from Srinagar towards Jammu. Police personnel deployed at the Chanderkote security checkpoint signalled the vehicle to stop, but the driver sped away, they said.

Officials said police fired three rounds of fire at the fleeing vehicle in an attempt to intercept it, but it continued towards the Nashri area, prompting a massive search operation involving the district police, the CRPF and the Army.

"The district police have seized the suspicious Scorpio near Dalwas, and ► P11

Polling deferred for 7 PoJK seats

ISLAMABAD: Voting for seven of the 11 seats in the third phase of polls in Pakistan-occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoJK) that were scheduled for August 10 have been postponed for an indefinite period due to "concerns over the law-and-order situation," it was announced on Friday.

After the first and second phases of the polls, which were marred by violent protests, were held on July 27 and August 2 respectively, voting was scheduled on Monday for 11 constituencies of Poonch district in the PoJK.

There are a total of 45 seats on which polls are being

held for the so-called Kashmir Legislative Assembly.

"The electoral process in seven constituencies of Poonch district and Sudhnoti's Pallandri will not be held on August 10," the PoJK's Election Commission said in a statement.

However, polling for three constituencies of Bagh district and one in Haveli will be held on August 10 as per schedule, it said.

"We have received a report from the home secretary there that shows concerns over the law-and-order situation in some areas of Poonch district and Pallandri district. The next date for the polls ► P11

Time for India to relocate from financial inclusion to empowerment: Dr Jitendra



NEW DELHI: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences; Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Dr Jiten-

dra Singh today observed that consequent to programmes like "Jan Dhan Yojana" initiated by PM Sh Narendra Modi, India has substantially advanced financial inclusion and is now time for India to move decisively from financial inclusion to financial empower-

ment

The Minister said that India must build an intelligent, secure and trusted financial ecosystem driven by emerging technologies, stating that the next phase of the country's FinTech growth will be shaped by Artificial Intelligence, quantum technologies, cybersecurity, blockchain and trusted digital innovation.

Addressing the 3rd India International FinTech Festival in New Delhi, Dr. Jitendra Singh said India's FinTech sector has emerged as a critical driver of the country's economic transformation through close collaboration among the banking sector, financial institutions, technology companies and StartUps. He observed that this collaborative approach, supported by strong ► P11

CM inaugurates upgraded Residency Road-High Street Omar lays foundation of Rs 140.52 Cr water, sewage projects for Udh, Reasi

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JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday inaugurated the upgraded Residency Road-High Street in Jammu, a landmark urban infrastructure project executed by Jammu Smart City Limited (JSCL) under the Smart City Mission at a cost of ₹9.18 crore.

The project has transformed nearly 1.2 kilometres of the Residency Road-High Street corridor, covering the stretches from Raghunathji Mandir to CM House,



Vivekanand Chowk to Raghunath Mandir Chowk, and Vir Marg Chowk to Vivekanand Chowk.

As part of the upgradation, an ► P11

CM reviews restoration of NH-44

RAMBAN: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday said that fruit-laden trucks from Kashmir and petroleum tankers from Jammu were being given priority on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway to ► P11

Ties with Pak can move ahead only in 'terror-free' environment: Govt

► India, China reviewed LAC situation during talks: MEA



NEW DELHI: Relations with Pakistan can only progress in an "environment free of terror"; however, the neighbouring nation continues to use "terrorism as an instrument of state policy" against India, the Centre informed Parliament on Friday.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said this while responding to Samajwadi Party MP Dharmendra Yadav's query on the present status of relations between India and Pakistan since the Pulwama terror attack, along with the changes that have taken place at the political, diplomatic and trade level between the two countries.

"It is government's firm position that India's relations with Pakistan can only move ahead in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence. However, Pakistan continues to follow the policy of cross-border terrorism and using terrorism as an instru-

ment of state policy against India," the EAM said in a written response in the Lok Sabha.

Following the Pulwama terror attack in 2019, India withdrew Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan, and hiked customs duty on all goods originating in or exported from Pakistan to 200 per cent, he said.

Pakistan, subsequently, announced certain unilateral measures, including downgrading of diplomatic relations and suspension of bilateral trade with India, the government said.

In response to the Pahalgam terror attack perpetrated by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists on April 22, 2025, India took a number of diplomatic steps, including placing the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, closing the checkpoint in Attari, restricting visas, and downsizing diplomatic and official presence at the respective Missions, Jaishankar said.

"Military action targeting terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir was also undertaken. At present, India and Pakistan maintain their respective diplomatic Missions in each other's capital," he added.

Both sides continue to have functional engagements, including DGMO-level talks, exchange of pre-notifications of flight testing of ballistic missiles, and the sharing of lists of nuclear installations and prisoners in each other's custody, the Union minister said.

The minister was also asked the number of bilateral talks held between India and Pakistan at various levels during the last five years along with the issues discussed therein and ► P11

Stop interfering in J&K, address violations in PoJK: Omar to Pak

► Abdullah backs Mohan Bhagwat's remark



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JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday dismissed Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's criticism of the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, saying Pakistan should stop interfering in India's internal affairs and instead focus on alleged human rights violations in the territory under its control.

Omar was responding to statements of Pakistan

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar marking August 5 as "Youm-e-Istehsal" or the day of exploitation, referring to the abrogation of Article 370 by India in 2019.

"But aren't they the ones committing human rights violations in the part of Jammu and Kashmir that is under their occupation? They are the ones violating human rights there, aren't they? So many people have been killed in recent days," Omar said, replying to a question on the remarks by the Pakistan prime minister.

Lashing at Shariff or describing the August 5 decisions as a human rights violation, Abdullah said the issue is India's internal matter and has nothing to do with Pakistan.

"We have our own dispute over the August 5 decision, but that is our internal matter. Pakistan has nothing to do with it. They should stop interfering in these matters because the more they interfere, the weaker ► P11

'Case against Iltija Mufti a fixed match'

JAMMU: Mocking police allegations that PDP leader Iltija Mufti bit an officer during a protest, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday dismissed an FIR against her as a "fixed match" designed to rebuild the party's credibility and asked if she was a "five-year-old child who can bite someone".

Abdullah launched the blunt attack in response to PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti's accusation that her party members, including her daughter Iltija, were being targeted by police for advocating the restoration of Article 370.

"Don't ask me for commentary on this fixed match," ► P11

9 BJP workers suspended over disputed slogans

SRINAGAR: BJP on Friday removed nine office-bearers and suspended their party membership following allegations of anti-woman slogans during a rally in Anantnag district.

"It has come to the notice of the District Unit, BJP Anantnag, that an unauthorised Tiranga Rally was held at Housing Colony Khanabal, Anantnag on August 5, 2026. The said rally was neither organised nor authorised by the BJP District Unit Anantnag, nor had it obtained the requisite permission from the District Administration," BJP's Anantnag district president Rakesh Koul said in an order.

He said the district unit has taken serious note of "objectionable and derogatory remarks" allegedly made against women during the rally.

"Such conduct is wholly unacceptable and is against the values, ► P11

Ready to cooperate with the police: Iltija

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SRINAGAR: PDP leader Iltija Mufti, who was on Friday questioned in connection with alleged assault of a police officer during a recent protest, asserted that she was willing to cooperate with the police inquiry but it was her right to protest peacefully for restoration of Article 370.

Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti and her daughter Iltija Mufti were booked for allegedly assaulting a police officer during a protest held by the party on Tuesday, against the striking down of Jammu and Kashmir's special status on August 5, 2019.

A case under Sections 132, 121 and 191(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita was registered against the duo.

On Friday, Iltija was summoned to Kothibagh police station and questioned for nearly two hours.

Addressing mediapersons later, the PDP leader said she told the police that she was happy to cooperate with whatever they want to know.

"If an inquiry happens against me, I am willing to cooperate with them; I am not the first woman or the last Kashmiri whom the police have summoned," she said.

Iltija said her fight was on behalf of every ► P11

Shri Budha Amarnath Yatra Sfs, emergency services conduct anti-terror mock drill on highway

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JAMMU: Security forces and emergency services on Friday conducted an anti-terror mock drill on the Jammu-Rajouri-Poonch National Highway in Rajouri district to test and strengthen their response mechanism ahead of the annual Shri Budha Amarnath Yatra beginning on August 17.

The exercise was carried out at Bagnoti Rajal in the Nowshera area, where a simulated terrorist attack on the highway was staged, officials said.

As part of the drill, two mock terrorists were shown attacking the highway before security personnel swiftly responded, neutralised both attackers and secured the area, they added.

The joint exercise involved the

Jammu and Kashmir Police, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), Fire and Emergency Services, and the Health Department, they said. The agencies rehearsed coordinated action, including rapid deployment, area sanitisation, casualty evacuation and emergency response.

Officials said the drill was aimed at enhancing inter-agency coordination and sharpening operational preparedness to deal with any terror-related contingency during the annual pilgrimage. The Shri Budha Amarnath Yatra passes through the Jammu-Rajouri-Poonch axis, with security agencies undertaking extensive measures to ensure the safety of pilgrims and maintain smooth movement along the route.

NEET Paper Leak: Experts accused of secrecy breach to face 'life sentence', Rs 1 Cr fine

NEW DELHI: The three National Testing Agency (NTA) subject experts breached an "obligation of secrecy" and circulated the question papers of the NEET UG exam, said the the chargesheet filed by the CBI before a Delhi court.

According to the provisions invoked against them, each faces the prospect of life imprisonment and a Rs 1 crore fine. Interestingly, the agency has considered them "public servants" while invoking the charges against them as they were entrusted with "confidential" property or question papers.

The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate), or NEET-UG, is conducted by the NTA for medical aspirants. On May 12, the NTA cancelled the NEET-UG held on May 3 for admissions in medical courses amid allegations of paper leak. A re-ex-

amination was conducted on June 21.

Education minister Dharmendra Pradhan later resigned over the NEET paper leak row following the protests.

According to the chargesheet, biology subject expert Manisha Gurunath Mandhare, chemistry subject expert P V Kulkarni and physics expert Manisha Sanjay Havaladar had signed a "certificate of confidentiality".

It said each of them declared they were "not directly or indirectly involved in coaching for any entrance examination conducted by NTA, that the question/ question paper would not be written or typed personally by them, that it would be kept under lock and key while in their possession, and that they would not retain any note, copy or rough draft of questions".

The final report said that despite this obligation of secrecy, ► P11

Pak, Saudi and Turkiye sign joint defence pact

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye on Friday signed a joint defence agreement under which an attack against any one of the three countries will be regarded as an attack against them all, amid escalating tensions in West Asia.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed the 'Makkah Joint Defence Agreement' during a meeting at Al-Safa Palace in Mecca, according to a joint statement.

The agreement, signed during the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Summit for Joint Defence, is "intended to strengthen collective de-

terrence against any act of aggression, and stipulates that any armed attack against any one of the three States shall be regarded as an attack against them all," it added.

It further provides for the "enhancement of all aspects of defence cooperation among the three States," the statement said.

The development comes at a time when the West Asia conflict has widened across multiple fronts, including the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, prompting Gulf states to strengthen regional security coordination. Sharif had visited Saudi Arabia in April, during which he had held talks with the Kingdom's top ► P11

I-Day: Police conducted search ops, patrolling

JAMMU: Police on Friday conducted a cordon and search operation along with a long-range patrol in Jammu district as part of heightened security measures ahead of Independence Day, officials said.

The operation, carried out under the jurisdiction of police post Chowki Choura, covered the stretch from Gala to Thorni, including the villages of Miyari, Juthal and Amb, with the active participation of Village Defence Guard (VDG) members, ► P11

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