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Govt blames Pak after local youth rams CRPF convoy with IED-packed SUV in worst-ever J&K terror strike

Accuses It Of Supporting Azhar-Led JeM

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Srinagar: India on Thursday held Pakistan directly responsible for the worst-ever terrorist attack in J&K earlier in the day in which a suicide bomber belonging to ISI-controlled jihadi outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) rammed an explosive-laden Scorpio SUV into a bus carrying CRPF personnel, turning the bus into a mangled heap and killing at least 42.

The bomber, identified by a JeM spokesman as Adil Ahmed Dar, drove the Scorpio in-

FULL COVERAGE: P 14

to the bus at 3.15 pm on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway at Lethipora in Awantipora area of Pulwama district of south Kashmir, a hotbed of Pakistan-fuelled terrorism.

Though Adil alias Waqas Commando, a local from Gundi Bagh in Pulwama, was the lone occupant of the SUV rigged with explosives, he had the cover of JeM jihadis who opened fire on the CRPF men who were in three other buses to stop them from coming to the help of their fellow troopers. The victims, as well as those in the three other buses which formed the convoy, were travelling from Jammu to Srinagar to resume work after returning from leave.

The attack surpassed the Uri attack on the camp of the Army, which had led the Modi government to launch surgical strikes against terrorist groups operating from Pakis-



All that remains of a bus carrying 39

4 PREVIOUS DEADLIEST J&K TERROR STRIKES

Oct 1, 2001 | 38 killed as 3 JeM men ram vehicle bomb into main gate of J&K assembly

May 14, 2002 | 36 killed as 3 terrorists storm Kaluchak Army cantonment in Jammu

Sept 18, 2016 | 19 soldiers die in JeM fidayeen attack on Uri camp

Nov 24, 2002 | 14 killed as 2 suicide bombers attack Jammu's Raghunath temple. A few months earlier, 11 had died in similar attack on temple



42 JAWANS KILLED

3.30am | Convoy of 78 vehicles carrying some **2,500 CRPF personnel** leaves Jammu for Srinagar

3.15pm | Convoy at Latoomode in Awantipora, **30km from Srinagar**, when an explosive-laden Scorpio rams into a bus. The Scorpio may have been **waiting on a service road** and been driven onto the highway when the convoy appeared

► Bus blown away in deafening explosion. Another vehicle also impacted by blast

► CRPF says all SOPs were followed. It may now bar civilian vehicles during convoy movement

Suicide bomber was inspired by Taliban 'victory' over US in Af



Adil Ahmed Dar, a Class XI dropout, joined Jaish a year ago

Aarti Tikoo Singh & Raj Shekhar | TNN

Adil Ahmed Dar, a young man from Pulwama, was inspired to become a suicide bomber after the Taliban claimed victory following the American announce-

► **Afghan war veteran brain behind blast? P 14**

ment of withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan.

Media reports said Dar, 20, was a Class XI student when he dropped out of school to join Jaish in March last year. He trained for the attack for several months after initially doing "ground work" for the outfit, including initiating stone-pelting.

Minutes after the deadly terror attack in Pulwama, Telegram channels were abuzz with two videos and a picture of Dar, who claimed responsibility for the attack.

► **Continued on P 14**

Haryana bill seeks to end protection to Aravalis in Ggn

Mangar Bani Also At Risk Of Losing Cover

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Gurgaon: The Haryana government is preparing to move a bill in the assembly to amend the 118-year-old Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA), the law that bars construction activity in large sections of the Aravalis.

Multiple government sources and senior bureaucrats have told TOI the bill has been approved by the cabinet and is likely to be tabled in the assembly session. The amendment, they said, seeks to remove PLPA from areas notified under a Master Plan. Should this go through, Delhi's neighbourhood will feel the maximum impact since all of Gurgaon, most of Faridabad and ecological preserves like Mangar Bani will go out of PLPA. A senior forest

GREEN ZONE

Punjab Law Preservation Act bars non-forest activity in areas notified under it:

- 20,200 hectares in south Haryana
- Of 20,200 ha, 6,869 ha are in Gurgaon, 4,227 ha in Faridabad
- Law also covers some portions of Shivalik Ranges in northern Haryana
- Ecological preserves like Mangar Bani will also go out of the purview of law

officer said, "The forest department should be closed as it will have no role any more. It's better to shut the department and transfer officers to other units."

However, forest minister Rao Narbir Singh said the bill was yet to be cleared by the state cabinet.

► **Related report, P 5**

Lightning kills 12 in UP; PM stranded for 4 hrs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lightning strikes killed at least 12 people, including four schoolchildren, across Uttar Pradesh on Thursday as many parts of north India were lashed by snow, thunderstorms and hail. The bad weather left PM Modi stranded for four hours at Dehradun's Jolly Grant airport in the morning, preventing him from

addressing a public rally in Rudrapur, near Haldwani.

In Delhi, morning showers and hailstorms at isolated places led to the diversion of six flights and left many more delayed.

The city saw intermittent showers till evening. Friday is expected to be cloudy with the possibility of light rain or thundershowers.

► **Continued on P 18**

Sacrifices won't be in vain: Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned the "despicable and dastardly" strike and said the sacrifices of the security personnel would not be in vain. Union minister Arun Jaitley warned of strong retaliatory action against terror outfits. "Terrorists will be given an unforgettable lesson for their heinous act," he said. **P 14**

Allowing civilian cars proved fatal?

The CRPF took all precautions, including route sanitisation and deploying men as lookouts, but allowing civilian vehicles during the movement proved disastrous. Officials said the convoy was longer than usual as the highway was closed for six days due to which troopers back from leave or training were not able to reach their camps. **P 14**

Jaish ISI's sword arm for attacks on India

Jaish-e-Mohammad has been ISI's most-favoured group for terror attacks in India since Lashkar-e-Taiba made way for it two years ago. Jaish, which has been involved in suicide attacks since its formation, edged out Hafiz Saeed's Lashkar after the latter's parent outfit, Jamaat-ud-Dawah, announced that it would enter mainstream politics in Pakistan. **P 14**

UAE likely to deport '93 blasts suspect

A fugitive wanted for plotting and helping transport explosives used in the 1993 Mumbai blasts was detained in the UAE on Wednesday and is likely to be deported soon. Abu Bakar Abdul Gafoor, 51, is alleged to have undergone training with several others in explosives and in assembling firearms in a camp in PoK before the blasts. **P 11**

► **China's veto on UN ban allows Azhar to carry out terror acts, P 14** ► **US, Russia lead nations in condemning attack, P 14**

tan-occupied Kashmir:

India pinned the responsibility for the carnage on Pakistan. "The heinous and despicable act has been perpetrated by Jaish-e-Mohammad, a Pakistan-based and supported terrorist organisation proscribed by the United Nations and

other countries. This terror group is led by international terrorist Masood Azhar, who has been given full freedom by the government of Pakistan to operate and expand his terror infrastructure in territories under control of Pakistan and to carry out attacks in India

and elsewhere with impunity," the ministry of external affairs said. It further said, "The GOI is firmly and resolutely committed to take all necessary measures to safeguard national security. We are equally resolved to fight against the menace of terrorism. We de-

mand that Pakistan stop supporting terrorist and terror groups operating from their territory and dismantle the infrastructure operated by terrorist outfits to launch attacks in other countries."

► **Continued on P 14**

ment of withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan.

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