

# 10 EXPRESS NETWORK

## In Valley, teen held for spreading 'hate' on social media

Probably playing around with phone, didn't realise what he pressed; it's a mistake, says boy's mother

**NAVEED IQBAL**  
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 24

As schools reopened across the Valley and eager students returned to classrooms after more than 200 days, one student started his day not in his school but at Srinagar's juvenile home.

The 16-year-old was picked up from his home in a village in Handwara in north Kashmir on Thursday evening for allegedly spreading "fake news, rumours, and hatred."

This is the fourth such detention in recent weeks in Kashmir, and the first of a minor.

Two persons were earlier arrested from veteran separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani's home for posting his video, and

another individual, Imtiaz Kawa, arrested from Kupwara for his posts on Facebook.

On Monday, the minor's family scrambled to understand the reasons for his arrest, and the only explanation his mother could think of was that he was "probably playing around on his phone and did not know what he had pressed".

The police, however, said the minor was the administrator of a WhatsApp group, which he ran and used to spread "rumours" in the area. Senior officials from the district police told *The Indian Express* that the boy was using WhatsApp via Virtual Private Network (VPN) "in violation of the government order and spreading incorrect information on the group to instigate other(s)".

Another administrator for the same group, an 18-year-old, is absconding, according to the police.

At their single-storey home, the minor's three sisters, a younger brother and their



**Schools in the Valley reopened after 7 months on Monday.** Shuaib Masoodi

mother waited to hear from their father, a farm labourer, whether the boy could be released. "His father has taken all his documents and gone to the police. He is a young child; it was just a mistake," his mother said.

According to the family, the minor did odd jobs to support the family alongside his studies, and about two months ago bought himself a smartphone.

"He was in Jammu and returned on Wednesday itself. On Thursday, he stepped out with some boys from the village and returned around 6 pm. He was fiddling with his phone when the police knocked and asked to take him along," his mother said.

She said the police also took two other mobile phones from their home — one belonging to

the boy's father and another from his older sister. Both phones were later returned, she said.

In the FIR registered in the case on Friday, the police noted that they received information about some youths allegedly "circulating fake news and spreading rumours, hatred through social media platforms". Based on this, a case was registered under IPC Sections 153-153A (provocation, promoting enmity) and 505 (statements conducing to public mischief) and investigation was taken up.

At the teen's school, officials said the police came to collect details of his records to establish his age.

Sent on a 10-custody, the teen is presently at a juvenile home at Harwan in Srinagar.

## Rajasthan Police data: Atrocities on SCs/STs at 10-year high in 2019

**DEEP MUKHERJEE**  
JAIPUR, FEBRUARY 24

IN 2019, the number of cases registered pertaining to atrocities against members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs/STs) in Rajasthan was the highest in 10 years, data from the state police reveals.

According to police data, in 2019, a total of 8,591 cases pertaining to atrocities against SCs/STs were registered in Rajasthan. Over the past decade, the closest figure to this was in 2014 - 8,415 cases - during the tenure of the previous BJP government.

Recently, in Nagaur district, two Dalit youths were allegedly assaulted on suspicion of theft, and a screwdriver was allegedly inserted in the anus of one of them. The state government has drawn sharp criticism over the issue, with the opposition BJP alleging that the law-and-order situation in the state has steadily deteriorated ever since the Congress came to power in December 2018.

The police data suggests that there was a 50.67 per cent increase in atrocities against SCs/STs in 2019 as compared to 2018, when the total number of cases was 5,702. The data also reveals a 47.47 per cent increase in crimes against Dalits.

The state also saw an overall increase in the total number of IPC cases registered in 2019, with the crime rate increasing by 31.08 per cent in comparison with 2018. The total IPC crime cases registered in 2019 were 2,25,306 which was much higher than 1,71,889 cases in 2019.

The police maintains that the

### REGISTERED CASES UNDER ATROCITY ACT

Year	Number of cases
2009	6168
2010	6169
2011	6445
2012	6910
2013	8116
2014	8415
2015	7320
2016	6331
2017	5222
2018	5702
2019	8591

Source: Rajasthan Police

increase in the number of cases of atrocities against SCs/STs and the overall increase in crime rate is because of the police department's initiative of registering every FIRs to ensure that nobody returns from the police station with his grievance not being heard.

"Registration of FIRs takes a lot of paperwork and it means that a case will reach the court. Earlier, many police officials were reluctant to lodge FIRs and would simply take a complaint. But now, there is a clear message from the government that every person coming to the police station with a grievance should be heard and FIRs have to be registered. A person can also go to the SP office and register his FIR there if he is refused by the police station and the SP can also take action against such SHO who are reluctant to register

FIRs. This explains the increase in total number of cases. It is a conscious policy of the government that nobody's grievance is left unheard. It used to be especially difficult for people from the SC/ST demographic or underprivileged sections of the society to lodge FIRs but now everybody is being heard," said Ravi Prakash Meherda, Additional Director General of Police, civil rights and anti-human trafficking, Rajasthan.

He added that the police department is also minutely monitoring cases of atrocities against the SC/ST demographic.

According to the Rajasthan Police, 51 per cent cases of atrocities against SCs and 50 per cent cases of atrocities against STs were found to be false.

Activists have expressed concern over increasing number of cases against the weaker sections of the society in the state and have raised questions over the functioning of the police.

"The police are already bound to register FIR whenever a cognisable offence is reported to it and there are also Supreme Court guidelines on it. The logic that the increase in crimes against the SC/ST population is only because more FIRs are being registered doesn't seem correct. In many cases, we see that the police are not following the necessary guidelines such as providing protection to the victims and ensuring their rehabilitation. Had the Nagaur incident been not highlighted over social media and media, it may not have come to light. Many such cases never come to light and often the police stand with the accused in such cases," said Satish Kumar, director, Centre for Dalit Rights.

## 'What is better? Preventive action or FIR filed under UAPA?'

JAMMU AND Kashmir Director General of Police **DILBAG SINGH** talks to **NAVEED IQBAL** about the situation in the Valley and detentions in the region. Excerpts:



**Why were the panchayat elections in J&K deferred just five days after they were announced?**

Security is an on-going issue but (Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah) Geelani's health has been fluctuating, and that must have weighed on somebody's mind. Whether, if something happened, it would be the right thing in this kind of environment.

**Police have said they would book anyone accessing social media via VPN under the UAPA? Does the use of social media warrant arrest?**

Technical controls by service providers are not that strong. Despite a government order that some sites should not be accessed, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter are being accessed. VPN use is not right, but maybe it has not gone to the level of being illegal. We will decide... We have filed a case under the UAPA. Two people have been also picked up from Geelani's house for circulating a video of his, which amounts to instigation... Anything with a law and order bearing will be included.

**So you're saying that VPN use is not a criminal act but that police would decide whether something is legal or illegal?**

The use of VPN is violation of the government order allowing access to only whitelisted sites... However, we are focused on misuse rather than use of VPN.

**What is your estimation of the current situation in J&K?**

I understand that it is improving. The level of violence is down, falling 60% between January 2019 and January 2020, which is not a small thing. There have been no civilian killings or collateral damage. Till Thursday, since the beginning of the year, 23 militants had been killed.

**In that case, why is there fresh deployment in the Valley?**

It is only an exchange, inter-range movement, only the CRPF.

**How many people are in**

**detention now, and can those held in jails outside be brought back to J&K?**

The figure is not very high, must be around 150, other than under the PSA. The problem is that there is limited capacity in jails here... There are about 300 in jails outside, but some have been released and more cases are being reviewed.

Most groups have a scattered presence now. The Al-Badr has been almost wiped out and the local presence is of Hizb. The number of active militants are within 240. They were 317 in June 2018. But our worry is that while local recruitment has come down, infiltration is still continuing, an average of 150 a year. Since August 5, recruitment is less than 50% of previous years. This year, figure is not more than 22. Out of this, eight have been returned to their families.

**But if the situation is improving, why are people still being booked under laws like the PSA?**

The improvement of situation is relative... People made stories about thousands of arrests but we always maintained that the number was around a thousand during the entire period of tension. 90% was preventive action.

A total of 192 FIRs were filed, a majority under the UAPA, specifically for instigation or direct involvement in law and order situations. What would you choose? Preventive action and a situation where they are not booked in the long term or an FIR under the UAPA? I believe our preventive action controlled the situation significantly.

Additionally, the ratio between detention and retention is very low. Only about 20% have been retained, others released within 72 hours. To be fair, in hardly any case did we have to pick up those people again.

In case of the 20% who have been detained, the PSA was used in case of not more than 350. These are people who put up posters, went locality to locality to threaten or instigate people.

Politically, there were a maximum 36 detainees, all have been released but for nine detained under the PSA.

## In Himachal, ABVP hits streets against education costs

**GAGANDEEP SINGH DHILLON**  
SHIMLA, FEBRUARY 24

DEMANDING EDUCATION, civic and policy reforms, the ABVP has been organising lockdowns, gheraos and hunger strikes against the BJP government in Himachal Pradesh for the past two weeks.

Supporters of the students' outfit claim that though the ABVP is aligned with the RSS, it is not affiliated to any party and "is not the political wing of BJP". The outfit has organised protests in state capital Shimla, Dharamsala and other towns in the Himachal Pradesh.

"The government is making education expensive and liquor cheaper. It is all a business for them, but students will tolerate

none of this," said Vishal Verma, an ABVP supporter and a student of Himachal Pradesh University (HPU). Vishal, who took part in a protest outside the Deputy Commissioner's office in Shimla on Saturday, was referring to the new excise policy passed by the state cabinet on Monday, lowering prices of liquor and extending operational timings of bars in all star-rated hotels in some tourist areas till 2 am.

"On the other hand, the government is charging exorbitant fees at institutes of higher learning. The fee structure at two universities of agriculture and horticulture is among the highest in the country," alleged Rahul Rama, ABVP's state secretary.

Another bone of contention between the ABVP and the state government is the lack of a permanent campus for the Central

University of Himachal Pradesh (CUHP), which has been running from a camp office and temporary campuses spread across three towns in Kangra district.

From February 8 to 20, ABVP units launched protests in various government colleges and district headquarters, shutting down the CUHP premises at Dharamshala for two days.

They relented only after Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur held talks with them and assured them that he will take up the matter with the Centre. State BJP president Dr Rajeev Bindal said ABVP is an independent organisation with a student-centric viewpoint.

"The relationship between ABVP and BJP is unlike the one between Congress and NSUI," he added.

## IS cases: NIA searches 25 locations in TN, Karnataka

**DEEPTIMAN TIWARY**  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 24

THE NIA on Monday carried out simultaneous searches at 25 locations across Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in connection with three cases of Islamic State recruitment and subversive activities.

The agency has made multiple seizures from these locations, including electronic devices, dongles, books professing jihad and an auto rickshaw, NIA sources said.

According to NIA, in Tamil Nadu, searches were conducted at 10 locations — one location in Chennai, one in Kanchipuram district, one in Toothukudi district, three in Salem district and

four in Cuddalore district.

The case in connection with which these raids were conducted was originally registered by the Q Branch of Chennai police last year and subsequently taken over by the NIA on January 21. Till now, the agency has accused 10 in the case.

They are alleged to have conspired "with ISIS/ Daish member Khaja Moideen, native of Parangipettai, Cuddalore district, with the intention of carrying out unlawful activities and committing terrorist acts in India by procuring illegal arms, for furthering the objectives of the proscribed organization", an NIA statement said.

In Karnataka, NIA carried out searches at 15 locations in

Bengaluru city and Kolar district in connection with the investigation into the Al Hind module of IS, in which accused were alleged to be plotting to kill prominent Hindu leaders.

"This case pertains to a criminal conspiracy with an objective of murdering Hindu leaders, creating communal riots and to do anti-national activities by forming a terrorist gang, being inspired by ISIS, a proscribed terrorist organisation. The members of the terrorist gang conducted meetings at Bengaluru and other parts of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and propagated ISIS ideology, procured arms and ammunition and other incriminating material for executing their plans," NIA said.

### LURED VICTIMS USING 'FEMININE' VOICE

**ARUN JANARDHANAN**  
CHENNAI, FEBRUARY 24

CHENNAI CITY police have arrested a 27-year-old man from Tirunelveli for allegedly extorting money from more than 300 people by luring them into sex chats using a feminine voice.

While police confirm that at least 319 people have been cheated by Vallal Rajkumar Regan in Chennai city limits alone, officers are currently digging more data from districts as well as

abroad to trace more victims. Regan has been booked under IPC Sections 384 (punishment for extortion), 506 (i) (criminal intimidation) and the IT Act.

His modus operandi was to advertise sex chats on Locanto, an app that provides free classifieds. Those who responded to the ad were shown screenshots of receipts of police complaints he filed online, and blackmailed into making small digital payments.

The first complaint was filed by a man who lives on the out-

skirts of Chennai city. He was lured by Regan's advertisement on February 16, which offered sex chats and services over the phone. Soon after he responded to the ad, he received a call, with the caller, who had a feminine voice, introducing themselves as Priya.

Soon afterwards, the complainant received a message seeking a digital payment of Rs 100. When he made the payment using his digital wallet, he received a nude picture of a woman, and the caller de-

## Gujarat religious leader held for duping man of Rs 21 lakh

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
VADODARA, FEBRUARY 24

THE VADODARA police on Monday arrested a self-styled godman, Prashant Upadhyay, who was on the run after he was accused of duping a debt-ridden businessman of Rs 21 lakh on the pretext of reviving his business. Upadhyay was arrested from a hotel at Chikli in Vapi district by a team from the Warasiya police station.

"We had formed four teams after an FIR was filed. Initially we interrogated his devotees from the city and staffers of his ashram. His devotees from Anand, Kheda and Surat were also interrogated. Meanwhile, we had received a tip-off about his presence in Mumbai and then in Pune but on both occasions he had managed to flee before the police reached the spot," said DCP, Zone 4, Achal Tyagi.

"We received another tip-off that he was at a restaurant in Vapi and as soon as the police team reached there, they could identify him and arrested him," Tyagi added. He further said that all the places where he took shelter were owned by his devotees, but they were unaware that he was on the run as he had told them that he was visiting the cities to consult doctors for a heart ailment.

"If we come to know that any person had helped the accused



Prashant Upadhyay Express

to flee or had given shelter despite knowing that he was an accused in the case, they will be booked under relevant sections as well," Tyagi added. He will be produced in court for remand procedures on Tuesday.

According to the complaint filed by the businessman, Devraj Pandaya, he had visited Prashant Upadhyay, the godman of Bagala Mukhi Brahmarshtra Vidyamandir in Warasiya area of the city, after he suffered losses of over Rs 2 crore in his business. Upadhyay had promised to help him revive his business through various rituals and prayers and extracted Rs 21.80 lakh through gold and cash. Along with Pandaya, four other persons had also come forward and registered a complaint against him. He was also booked in the Gotri police station for threatening a woman through his disciples. The woman had held him responsible after his son did not return home for more than two years.

## Man convicted of molesting former actor on flight moves HC

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 24

A 41-YEAR-OLD businessman, convicted of molesting a former Bollywood actor, then a minor, onboard an Air Vistara flight from Delhi to Mumbai in December 2017, moved the Bombay High Court against his conviction by a POCSO court that sentenced him to three-years' imprisonment.

On January 15, Vikas Sachdev was convicted under Section 354 of the IPC, which provides punishment for assault or criminal force on woman with an intent to outrage her modesty.

Special Judge A D Deo in Dindoshi Sessions Court had found Sachdev guilty and convicted him for sexual assault under provisions of the POCSO Act, as the victim was minor when the incident took place.

However, the sentence was suspended for the man to approach the High Court. He has been granted bail. Thereafter, Sachdev filed an appeal before the High Court on February 20, challenging the POCSO court ruling.

Sachdev in his plea before the high court submitted that the trial court had erred in finding him guilty and said the victim had not identified him before the trial court. He further said it was a fit case to quash and set aside conviction and sentence against him.

**NOTICE INVITING e-TENDERS**  
The Executive Engineer, Civil Division No.XI, I&FC Department, Govt. of NCT of Delhi, Sector-15, Rohini, New Delhi-110085 invites on behalf of the President of India, online Percentage Rate tender from approved and eligible contractor registered with Irrigation & Flood Control Department for the following works and the Tender forms and other details can be obtained from the website <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in/>.  
T. NIT No: EE/CD-XI/NIT-29/2019-20/  
Name of work:- A/R & M/O Supplementary Drain.  
Sub-Work:- Providing mastic wearing course on the left bank of Supplementary Drain from RD 2247/1m to 2430/0m.  
Estimated Cost: Rs. 84,09,858/-  
Earnest Money: Rs. 168197/-  
Period of completion: 60 Days, Last date & time of submission of tender: upto 03:00 p.m on 27.02.2020.  
(Tender I.D. - 2020\_IFC\_188933\_1)  
DIP/Shadabhar/1392/19-20