

Cont. From Page 1

'Crypto hawala' may be used to revive separatism in J&K

A detailed study done by the Jammu and Kashmir Police, along with central security agencies, identified people in countries like China, Malaysia, Myanmar and Cambodia directing people in the union territory to create private crypto wallets, which are often set up using a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to avoid detection and require no Know Your Customer (KYC) or identity verification.

The Jammu and Kashmir Police has already suspended the use of VPNs in the valley as registering in crypto wallets was increasingly seen in the region of late. The VPN is a handy tool for terrorists as well as separatists to avoid detection.

The officials said the foreign handler sends cryptocurrency directly into these private wallets, placing the funds under local control without involving a regulated financial institution, and the wallet holder travels to major cities like Delhi or Mumbai to meet unregulated peer-to-peer (P2P) traders and sell crypto for cash at negotiated rates.

This effectively "breaks the financial trail," allowing foreign money to enter the local economy as untraceable cash, the officials said.

The key to this network is the use of "mule accounts," which are parking accounts that layer transactions. To keep the system running, syndicates have set up a structured commission system where such an account holder earns anywhere between 0.8 to 1.8 per cent per transaction.

The officials said that mule accounts belong to ordinary people who are motivated by the promise of commission and are assured that their role is safe and they are merely allowing their accounts to be used temporarily as parking accounts. All control of their bank accounts, including net banking usernames and passwords, is handed over to the scammer.

A single scammer is typically provided with multiple mule accounts, often ranging from ten to thirty accounts at a time, the officials said.

The officials said the rise of crypto hawala throws a new challenge of off-exchange trading and, by operating in the "grey market," these traders evade the anti-money laundering laws that apply to registered entities.

Officials warn that the "crypto-hawala" method is designed to bypass formal banking systems and avoid leaving any financial traces. By moving money from a digital private wallet to a physical cash transaction in a different city, the "financial trail" is effectively cut off.

Despite the FIU's efforts to regulate 49 major exchanges, the rise of "crypto hawala" presents a significant challenge for enforcement agencies since it allows foreign-sourced funds to enter the local economy without going through a regulated financial institution.

Cong handed over Assam land to infiltrators for votes: Modi

opment. In the Bihar polls, people gave the party record votes and seats even after 20 years in power," he said.

In the Maharashtra civic polls, too, people voted for the BJP and even in Kerala, "we now have a mayor from the party", Modi said.

"Just two days ago, the results of mayoral and councillor elections in major cities of Maharashtra were declared. Mumbai, one of the largest municipal corporations in the world, gave the BJP a record mandate for the first time, while people in most cities of the state have given us an opportunity to serve," he said.

"The recent election results across the country clearly show that voters want good governance and development, with focus on both progress and heritage," the PM said.

These elections also send another message that the country is consistently rejecting the "negative politics" of the opposition party, he said.

"The opposition lost the trust of the nation because it has no agenda for development, and such a party can never serve the interests of Assam or Kaziranga," he asserted.

The PM said Kaziranga is not just a national park, but the "soul of Assam and a priceless jewel of India's biodiversity, recognised by the UNESCO as a World Heritage Site".

Modi was speaking at the rally in Nagaon district, after laying the foundation stone for the Rs 6,957-crore Kaziranga Elevated Corridor, and virtually flagging off two Amrit Bharat trains.

Noting that Kaziranga is home to the one-horned rhinoceros, he said the wildlife faces challenges during floods when they seek higher ground and must cross the national highways, and often get trapped.

"The government is committed to ensure smooth traffic while keeping the forest safe. After the completion of the elevated corridor, vehicles will pass above while wildlife movement below will remain unhindered, with the design prepared keeping in mind traditional movement routes of rhinos, elephants and tigers," Modi said.

The corridor will also improve connectivity between Upper Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, and along with new rail services, will open fresh opportunities for the people.

Modi asserted that the BJP government's efforts ensured that no rhino was killed due to poaching at the Kaziranga National Park in 2025.

There was a time when rhino poaching was a major concern, with dozens of one-horned rhinos killed in 2013 and 2014, but the BJP government decided to strengthen security arrangements, provide modern resources to the forest department, enhance surveillance, and increase women's participation through 'Van Durga', he said.

"India has shown to the world that both ecology and economy can march together," Modi said.

The PM said when nature is protected, opportunities arise and Kaziranga has seen a steady rise in tourism in recent years, and local youth have found new sources of income through homestays, guide services, transport, handicrafts and small businesses.

The northeast has for decades faced the pain of distance - both of hearts and location - with people believing that development was happening elsewhere and they were being left behind, which affected not only the economy but also trust, the PM said.

"BJP governments at the Centre and states have changed this sentiment by prioritising the development of the northeast, and we began simultaneously to connect Assam through roadways, railways, airways and waterways," he said.

Modi alleged that when the Congress was in power at the Centre, Assam received only about Rs 2,000 crore in the rail budget, but his government increased it more than five times to nearly Rs 10,000 crore annually.

"This enhanced investment has led to large-scale infrastructure development, with new rail lines, doubling and electrification boosting railway capacity and passenger facilities," he said.

Assam's development is opening up opportunities for the entire northeast, and the Act East Policy has got a new direction, which will take the region to new heights, the PM stated.

Wars now complex due to new dimensions: Rajnath

tion was not at the scale it should have been, he said while addressing a gathering at the inaugural ceremony of a medium calibre ammunition facility at Solar Industries here.

There were challenges and doubts regarding private sector defence production while the country took steps towards 'atmanirbharta', but the present government opened up the sector by introducing changes in policies and simplifying the processes as it had full faith in their potential, Singh said.

"It is also resulting in good quality, better timelines as well as improvement in productivity and delivery. Our defence ecosystem has improved a lot. The way scientific temperament and technology driven approach has developed in the private defence sector is very laudable," he said.

The private sector is now ahead of the public sector with regards to research and development, the union minister pointed out.

"India is moving fast towards becoming a major arms exporter," Singh asserted.

Shortage in ammunition supply was felt but the government has brought in self-reliance in the sector, he said while lauding Solar Group for its various defence production capacities like Pinaka missiles as well as Nagas-tra drone used in Operation Sindoor.

The government's ambition is that India should become the global hub of ammunition production, Singh added.

"Wars are becoming very complex and its intensity is also increasing continuously. In such a scenario, the preparation for war should be on war footing. The nature of war is changing very fast. New methods are coming forth which were never there in traditional war," he said.

"Wars are now not limited to borders but its effect are felt directly by the common public. Energy, trade, tariff, supply chains, technology and information have become the new dimensions of conflict," he added.

In the face of these changes, the country's alertness on the borders, weapons, hardware and defence industrial manufacturing have increased, he emphasised.

"Whatever be the form of war, the need of the hour is a strong defence industrial base, research and development and production by private sector. The government wants contribution of private sector in defence manufacturing sector to be at least 50 percent of production," he said.

Domestic defence production had risen from Rs 46000 crore in 2014 to more than Rs 1.50 lakh crore now, of which the private sector's contribution is Rs 30000, Singh informed.

Defence exports were just Rs 1000 crore 10 years ago, but has now increased to Rs 25000 crore, with the government's target being Rs 50000 crore by 2029-30, the

union minister said.

Security beefed up ahead of R-Day

hicles was also being carried out at all major intersections in the twin capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar and elsewhere in the UT to keep a check on any suspicious movement, officials said.

Search operations and area domination exercises had also been started around the venues where Republic Day would be celebrated, officials said.

The main Republic Day function in Jammu would be held at M A Stadium and in Kashmir at Bakshi stadium. "At both the places, stringent security arrangements have been made," the officials added.

"Police and paramilitary personnel have been deployed in the city and other district headquarters while checkpoints have been established at various places in Jammu and Srinagar," officials said.

The entry and exit points in the two capital cities had also been properly plugged, the officials added, saying that all the vehicles entering the city areas and leaving the two cities were being properly checked.

8 jawans injured in Chatroo gunfight

eration conducted as part of the ongoing joint counter-terror exercises along with police.

"Operations remain underway with additional forces inducted to reinforce the cordon, supported by close coordination with civil administration and security agencies," Army said, commending troops for their exceptional professionalism and resolve while responding to hostile fire under challenging terrain and conditions.

According to officials, one of the search teams came across a group of two to three foreign terrorists of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), who fired indiscriminately and also lobbed a few grenades in an attempt to break the cordon.

The troops retaliated and reinforcements from Army, CRPF and police were rushed to further tighten the cordon. There was intermittent firing between the two sides for some time, officials said.

Eight soldiers suffered splinter injuries and were subsequently evacuated to the hospital. A massive search operation was on to track and neutralise the terrorists, the officials added.

Advanced surveillance equipment, including drones, and sniffer dogs had been deployed to speed up the operation, officials said.

This was the third encounter between security forces and terrorists in Jammu region this year.

Encounters broke out in Kahog and Najote forests in the Billawar area of Kathua district on January 7 and 13, respectively.

On December 15 last year, a police officer was martyred in an encounter with terrorists at Soan in the Majalta area of Udhampur district. The terrorists had managed to escape, taking advantage of thick foliage and darkness.

Speaker nominates BAC members

Business.

According to a notification issued by the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Secretariat, the Speaker would head BAC as its chairman.

The nominated members include Leader of Opposition Sunil Kumar Sharma, Ali Mohammad Sagar, Mubarik Gul, M Y Tarigami, Ghulam Ahmad Mir, Sajad Gani Lone, Mir Mohammad Fayaz and Choudhary Mohammad Akram.

Yasir Dar backed out at last minute

10, killing 15 people and injuring several others.

Interrogations of the arrested suspects have highlighted recruitment tactics used by the doctor-turned-terrorist, leading to the nabbing of a Shopian resident, Yasir Ahmed Dar, by the NIA.

Officials said Nabi had successfully radicalised Dar as a potential suicide bomber, but during a meeting in August last year, he backed out at the last minute, citing the "apple harvest season" and repairs at home as reasons.

According to the officials, Dar had been in contact with Nabi since 2023 and he admitted that Nabi's professional status as a medical doctor played a significant role in his influence, making his extremist rhetoric more persuasive and "trustworthy" to recruits.

The probe indicated that Nabi was not merely a terrorist but a strategic recruiter who was actively building secondary, independent cells to ensure the continuity of operations even if primary cells were compromised, the officials said.

During the investigation, the police also recovered a voice note from the phone of one of the accused in which he is pronouncing 'Bayat' (oath of allegiance) for Jihad.

The name of Dar, a school dropout, had surfaced earlier

in investigations when one of his friends had joined the ranks of terror groups.

During interrogation, it came to light that he had been in touch with Nabi through Telegram and he was always asked to ensure the best physical training, the officials said.

Dar is the second potential suicide bomber that Nabi was trying to rope into the terror module, as he was a "hardcore radical" and insisted that a human bomber was essential for their terror operations, they said.

As the terror module was being exposed by police last year, one person identified as Jasir alias Danish was arrested from Qazigund in South Kashmir.

Danish admitted to having met the 'Doctor module' in October 2024 at a mosque in Kulgam, from where he was taken to rented accommodation at Al-Falah University in Faridabad.

Jasir had told his interrogators that while others in the white-collar terror module wanted him to be an over-ground worker (OGW) for the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed, he was intensely brainwashed by Nabi over several months to become a suicide bomber.

The plan, however, collapsed in April last year after he backed out, citing his poor economic condition and the belief that suicide was forbidden in Islam.

The suicide bomber scouting plot of the module, cracked by Srinagar police, adds a dangerous new dimension to the investigation into the interstate terror network linked to the JeM.

Nabi, a 28-year-old doctor from Pulwama, emerged as the most radicalised and key operative in the network spanning Kashmir, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh.

Officials believe he was planning a powerful Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) blast timed around the Babri Masjid demolition anniversary on December 6.

He planned to place the VBIED around a crowded place, either in the national capital or at some place of religious importance, and then disappear, officials said.

According to the interrogation of the co-accused, Nabi's transformation began after a trip to Turkiye in 2021 with co-accused Dr Muzammil Ahmad Ganaie, where they met JeM overground workers.

Following the trip, Nabi and Ganaie, who taught at Faridabad's Al Falah University, began accumulating vast quantities of chemicals from the open market, including 360 kg of ammonium nitrate, potassium nitrate and sulphur, much of which was stored near the university campus.

The December plot fell apart when Srinagar police's meticulous investigation led to Ganaie's arrest and the seizure of explosives, which caused Nabi to panic and finally resulted in a premature blast outside Red Fort.

The intricate inter-state terror network was exposed after a small but significant incident of the appearance of JeM posters on walls in Bunpora, Nowgam, on the outskirts of Srinagar on October 19, 2025.

Srinagar police registered a case and reviewed CCTV footage, leading to the arrest of three locals - Arif Nisar Dar alias Sahil, Yasir-ul-Ashraf, and Maqsood Ahmad Dar alias Shahid - all with prior stone-pelting cases.

Their interrogation led to the arrest of Maulvi Irfan Ahmad, a former paramedic turned moulvi from Shopian, who had supplied posters and used his access to radicalise the doctors.

Daughters true carriers of change, progress in evolving world: LG

chokhar Digital Library should be expanded to other areas, empowering daughters to contribute confidently to the journey of a developed India.

Kavinder meets Shekhawat, discusses tourism infra

proposal would be submitted separately, and sought the ministry's guidance and support for the successful conduct of the event.

He also laid stress upon upcoming major Buddhist events, including the display of sacred relics of Lord Buddha on the occasion of Buddha Purnima 2026.

He emphasised that the bringing of sacred relics of Lord Buddha to Ladakh would significantly boost spiritual tourism and promote peace and harmony.

Gupta also underscored the need for comprehensive development, conservation and upgradation of Ladakh's ancient monasteries, seeking special financial and technical assistance for structural conservation, infrastructure improvement and visitor amenities.

He highlighted the importance of regular cultural festivals and events to promote local artists, strengthen cultural tourism and enhance Ladakh's national and international visibility.

Shekhawat appreciated the initiatives and assured that the proposals would be examined sympathetically, with a view to supporting sustainable tourism development and preservation of Ladakh's unique cultural and spiritual heritage.

A R Rahman Addresses His 'Communal' Remark: Never Wished To Cause Pain, Hope My Sincerity Is Felt

NEW DELHI, JAN 18:

Noted music composer A R Rahman shared a video post on his social media on Sunday, addressing the backlash following his comments in one of the recent interviews and said the intentions can "sometimes be misunderstood", but he didn't wish to cause any pain with his words.

Rahman, known for his music in films such as "Roja", "Bombay" and "Dil Se.." among others, shared a post on his Instagram handle, in which he explained the same.

The 59-year-old composer said music has always been "the way to connect, celebrate and honour India's culture." "India is my inspiration, my teacher and my home. I understand that intentions can sometimes be misunderstood. But my purpose has always been to uplift, honour and serve through mu-



sic. I have never wished to cause pain, and I hope my sincerity is felt," he said in the video.

"I feel blessed to be Indian, which enables me to create a space which always allows freedom of expression and celebrates multicultural voices. From nurturing Jhalaa, presented at the WAVES summit in front of the honourable

added.

His comments come days after his interview with BBC Asian Network, during which he noted how less work has been coming to him due to a power shift within the Hindi film industry in last years and said it could also be due to the "communal thing".

"I'm not in search of work. I want work to come to me; the sincerity of my work to earn things. I feel it's a jinx when I go on in search of things... People who are not creative have the power now to decide things and this might have been a communal thing also but not in my face. It comes to me as Chinese whispers that they booked you but the music company went ahead and hired their five composers. I said, 'Oh that's great, rest for me, I can chill out with my family,' he said in the interview. (Agencies)

Prime Minister and Rooh-e-Noor, to collaborating with the young Naga musicians, to creating a string orchestra, to mentoring the Sunshine orchestra, also building Secret Mountain, India's first multicultural virtual band and the honour of scoring Ramayana, alongside Hans Zimmer. Each journey has strengthened my purpose," he

Taiwanese reporter accused of bribing military officers to leak information to China

Taipei, Jan 18 : A

journalist in Taiwan was detained Saturday on allegations of bribing army officers to provide military information to people from mainland China, as the self-ruled island cracks down on potential infiltration from China.

Taiwan's Qiaoou District Prosecutors Office said in a statement that a district court ordered the detention of a television reporter surnamed Lin and five current and retired military officers. The statement didn't identify the journalist, but CTi TV issued a statement about the detention of its reporter Lin Chen-you.

The company said that it does not know the details of the case, but called for a fair judicial process, adding "God bless Taiwan."

While Taiwan regularly pursues espionage cases



within the government and military, allegations against journalists are unusual.

Beijing, which claims Taiwan as its own territory and threatens to take control of the island by force if necessary, has been increasing military pressure against the island. Last month, China's military launched large-scale drills around it for two days after a Washing-

ton announcement of large-scale arms sales to Taiwan.

Prosecutors accuse Lin of paying amounts ranging from several thousand to tens of thousands of Taiwan dollars (tens to hundreds of US dollars) to current military officers in exchange for their providing information to "Chinese individuals." The office didn't specify who the Chinese people

were or whether they were linked to the Chinese government.

Authorities raided the premises of the reporter and nine current and retired military personnel on Friday as part of an investigation into violations of Taiwan's national security and corruption laws and disclosure of confidential information. CTi said that its offices were not raided.

According to Lin's Facebook page, he was a political reporter and anchor covering the island's legislature.

China and Taiwan have been governed separately since 1949, when the Communist Party rose to power in Beijing following a civil war. Defeated Nationalist Party forces fled to Taiwan, which later transitioned from martial law to multiparty democracy. (AP)