

# NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

## 'Israel Group' of JeM neutralised after 18-month operation in J&K: IGP Jammu

**JAMMU, FEB 23:** Inspector General of Police (Jammu Zone) Bhim Sen Tuti said on Monday that in a joint operation, security forces have neutralised a seven-member Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terror module, dubbed the "Israel Group", bringing an end to a year-and-a-half-long operation in the Kishtwar belt of Jammu and Kashmir.

Three members of the module, including its self-styled commander, Saifulah, were killed in an encounter with the security forces in Kishtwar district on Sunday.

"The group of seven JeM terrorists had infiltrated into Indian territory in April 2024. Since then, this group was engaged on 17 different occasions. Over the last year and a half, we have successfully neutralised all of them. Sunday marked the culmination of this year-and-a-half-long operation," the IGP told reporters at Kishtwar.

Describing the module as a "hardcore terrorist group", he said, "The group was known as the Israel Group. It was a hardcore terrorist module that inflicted significant damage on security forces and also caused harm to civilians."

Tuti said acting on precise intelligence, the last three members of the group, including Saifulah, were neutralised in the Chatroo area of Kishtwar.

The IGP asserted that the campaign against terror would continue.

"This operation will continue. Our pursuit is long and in the coming time, we expect more successful operations. This fight will continue until the entire terror network is completely dismantled," he said.

Meanwhile, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of Counter-Insurgency Force Delta, Major General A P S Bal, issued a stern warning to anti-national elements, saying they would be identified and neutralised wherever they are.

"My message to anti-national elements is clear —



anyone who is an enemy of the nation, wherever they may be and in whatever form, will be identified, targeted and neutralised," he told reporters in Kishtwar.

The officer asserted that intelligence-based operations would continue with sustained momentum.

"To the Awam, I want to say — no matter how grave the challenges are, our courage will never diminish. Whatever we have achieved has been possible because of the support of every single person in the region," he said.

The GOC said recent successes in anti-terror operations are the results of months of sustained and coordinated efforts by security forces. "We have been collectively working on this for months. Despite challenges of terrain, rain, snowfall and landslides, operations were carried out relentlessly," he said.

The GOC highlighted the extraordinary coordination among the Army, Jammu and Kashmir Police (JKP) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), stating that seamless collaboration at every level ensured operational success even in confined and rugged areas.

"We were conscious that such prolonged operations can lead to fatigue among the troops. Therefore, we had planned in a manner that ensured adequate rotation of forces. We always had sufficient troops in the reserve — either to be air-dropped by helicopters or to move on foot across extremely difficult terrain. Sometimes it would take six to eight hours to reach a location, but we ensured that we got there."

He said the large-scale operation showcased high tactical precision, real-time drone surveillance, the use of night-vision equipment and swift mobilisation of reinforcements, including special forces. He added that despite harsh weather and challenging terrain, there was no casualty among the security personnel.

Major General Bal also made a special mention of

The JeM module was under pursuit since April-May last year. Three of its members — all hardcore terrorists — were eliminated in April 2025, while the remaining members — including Saifulah, Adil and two others — were on the run, the GOC said.

Based on intelligence inputs from police, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and other sources, a joint counter-terrorist operation, codenamed Operation Trashi-I, was launched on January 14 in the Chhatroo area by CIF Delta troops under the aegis of White Knight Corps. Contact with the terrorists was established on January 18 and their well-stocked hideout was busted, the GOC added.

Relentless pursuit led to the elimination of one terrorist, codenamed Adil, on February 4, he said.

The security forces re-engaged the remaining terrorists at around 11 am on February 22. The final encounter site, located on steep mountain slopes, was cordoned off on the intervening night of February 21 and 22. In the ensuing operation, the three hardcore terrorists were eliminated, completing the dismantling of the group, the GOC said.

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Army-trained dog Tyson, who was injured after the terrorists opened fire. Tyson was employed to verify the presence of the ultras inside the "dhok" (hut).

"The injured elite German Shepherd, who was the first to charge at the terrorist hideout and sustained a bullet injury in the exchange of fire, was immediately airlifted for medical treatment and is reported to be safe and stable," an official said.

During the search operations, war-like stores, including three AK-47 rifles, were seized.

The operations were conducted on both extremes of the area of responsibility — one in the Udhampur sector and the other in the Kishtwar sector.

The IGP said action would be taken against those who supported the terrorists.

"Those who provided shelter and support to this group will soon see decisive action against them as well. In the coming days, you will witness how firmly we act against their collaborators," he said, adding that the efforts to dismantle the terror ecosystem would be intensified.

"More operations are in the pipeline and you will see the results for yourselves," he said.

The IGP said there are only three local terrorists in Kishtwar district now. "These are the same three individuals who have been active in the region for nearly two decades. During 2018, 2019 and 2020, some new recruits had joined terror ranks, but all of them have been neutralised," he added.

Tuti appreciated the public support for the success of the operations. "I believe the society is not supporting them. Otherwise, such successful operations would not have been possible.

Most of the intelligence inputs we receive come through civilians. The public stands with us, the public stands with India and these terrorists will never succeed in their nefarious designs," he asserted.

## Prez Unveils Bust Of First Indian Governor General At Rashtrapati Bhavan

**NEW DELHI, FEB 23:** President Droupadi Murmu on Monday unveiled the bust of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, the first and only Indian Governor General of independent India, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here.

The initiative is part of a series of steps being taken towards shedding vestiges of colonial mindset, the President's secretariat said.

Rajagopalachari's bust at the grand open staircase near Ashok Mandap in Rashtrapati Bhavan replaces that of Edwin Lutyns, the main



architect of several structures in New Delhi.

"This initiative is part of series of steps being taken towards shedding the vestiges

of colonial mindset and embracing, with pride, the richness of India's culture, heritage, timeless traditions and honouring those who served

Bharat Mata with their extraordinary contributions," the President's Secretariat said on X.

Among the dignitaries present on the occasion were Vice President C P Radhakrishnan, Minister of Health and Family Welfare J P Nadda, Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting L. Murugan and family members of Rajagopalachari. (Agencies)

## 'Heartbroken' with Bengal's status under Mamata rule, Modi says change 'inevitable' in state

**KOLKATA, FEB 23:** In a public appeal to West Bengal voters weeks before the declaration of Assembly polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said he was "heartbroken by the deceit and anguish" faced by the cross-section of the state's citizens under the current Mamata Banerjee regime and vowed to correct it by building a "Viksit Paschim Banga".

Modi said while a political change was "inevitable", a "judicious choice" by voters could align the state with the accelerated development seen in the rest of the country.

In an open letter written in Bengali, which began with the slogan 'Jai Maa Kali', Modi targeted the TMC government on issues ranging from lack of governance and appeasement politics to fake voters, employment deficiency and women's safety.

The PM also promised citizenship to refugees through the CAA and pledged to stop infiltration through state

borders as part of his pre-election promises.

"Bengal used to be the nation's vanguard in both financial and industrial sectors in post-Independence India. It pains me to witness the brittle and sick state it has turned into. It is impossible to describe the irreversible damage which six decades of misgovernance and appeasement politics have caused," Modi said.

"While on the one hand the youth are forced to migrate to other states for lack of employment opportunities, on the other, women of West Bengal are fearful and alarmed due to a lack of security," he added.

Naming Bengal's political and cultural icons such as Swami Vivekananda, Rishi Aurobindo, Subhas Chandra Bose, Rabindranath Tagore and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee at multiple points in his letter, Modi regretted the "darkness of chaos that grips West Bengal" in current times.

"The West Bengal visu-

alised by its iconic forefathers, such as Swami Vivekananda and Rishi Aurobindo, is now riddled with vote bank politics, violence and anarchy. The son of the soil of this state, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, whose call for freedom had once stirred the whole country, that holy land is now blemished with infiltration and torture of women. Fake voters currently dominate Rabindranath Tagore's 'Sonar Bangla'.

"The whole country is worried about the darkness of chaos that West Bengal is sinking into," the PM wrote.

Insisting that the time has come to break the shackles of "silent suffering", the PM said that change is now "inevitable" in Bengal.

"How long should we continue to suffer in silence? Change is now inevitable. The standard of living has remarkably improved in other states. Smiles have returned to the lips of the poor. Ayushman Bharat has provided health cover, new employ-

ment is guaranteed for the youth and women's safety is ensured. Bengal too should be part of this growth and development," Modi said.

Stating that he "waited eagerly for a chance to serve the people," the PM quoted Tagore's 'Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high' and promised to bring an end to "corruption and mal-governance".

"We will ensure women's safety, curtail migration for work and restore the state's former glory. Religiously persecuted refugee brothers and sisters who took shelter here would be granted citizenship through CAA and we will establish the rule of law by stopping infiltration," Modi said.

The letter coincided with the Bengal BJP's ongoing house-to-house 'Griha Sampark Abhiyan' during which party leaders will distribute the PM's communication to households during their grassroots outreach programme. (Agencies)

## Vijay slams Stalin, says CM's real friends are 'bribe, corruption'

**VELLORE (TAMIL NADU), FEB 23:** Launching yet another scathing attack on Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, TVK founder Vijay on Monday alleged that the DMK president's real friends are "bribe, corruption, and eyeing political gains."

Vijay, who has been mounting sharp attacks against the DMK and Stalin in particular, dared the CM to declare his assets disclosing the financial status before he stepped into politics.

"What was the source. Was it your hard earned money or it was amassed after you came to power? Can you declare it openly," the actor asked the CM and added that if he raised the issue of corruption, then all corrupt elements would "fling mud on us."

But he was not concerned about that because people know about him.

He also accused the chief minister of making false promises to the people and sought to debunk the governing party's claim of having developed the Tamil Nadu into a "superstar state".

He alleged Stalin's "real friends are bribe, corruption, and eyeing political gains."

The CM and the ruling party has often said that the state registered, under the DMK rule, double-digit eco-



nomic growth rate of 11.19 per cent (2024-25).

Addressing a meeting of party functionaries here, Vijay termed the Assembly polls due in April this year as a "surprising election" as all parties in the state are allegedly teamed up against him and reiterated that the contest was between the DMK and TVK only.

Fighting the DMK's poll narrative of polls as a fight between "Tamil Nadu and Delhi-NDA," he said the battle was actually between the state's people and corruption and alleged that the DMK government was "inept."

The Assembly election is "a war between Vijay and Stalin," he said, and reiterated his refrain that TVK is a "pure force" and accused the DMK yet again as an "evil force".

Rejecting the DMK's claim

of having developed Tamil Nadu into a superstar state, Vijay, the chief of the fledgling Tamilaga Vetti Kazhagam (TVK) said that the state was "such a superb" on during the times of iconic leaders K Kamaraj, CN Annadurai and M G Ramachandran.

Dubbing the DMK regime as "good-for-nothing ultra model government," he alleged the state has been transformed into a super-standup comedian-run state.

The TVK chief, targeting the CM again, said that he was not concerned about his personal life.

"Be what you want to be. But your governance is flawed and not required for TN," he alleged.

The actor-politician claimed that Tamil Nadu meant Vijay and he represented the entire state.

Referring to Stalin's statement that he had no foes in politics and that all were his friends, Vijay asked, "then why blame me for Karur stampede," referring to the tragedy during a TVK rally that killed 41 persons and injured many.

Further, he asked: "Why refuse venue and permission for TVK (rallies and events), if we are friends...you did everything and blamed us for Karur tragedy."

Praising people for superb clarity, he said he would visit every village and personally meet the people once the TVK formed the government following a huge win in the 2026 Assembly election.

Vijay, who arrived to a rousing reception by party workers at Agaramcheri village near the Pallikonda toll plaza on the Chennai-Bengaluru Highway in this district, administered a pledge to the TVK members.

"No one can buy us, our vote is for (party symbol) whistle. We won't believe anyone and get deceived. We won't deviate from our words. This is the truth," Vijay said and asked his party workers to repeat after him.

Vijay reiterated that the TVK's stand was secularism and social justice.

He continued to wear his trademark white shirt and a sandal-like mild coloured trouser, while sporting his usual stubble. (PTI)

## Pre-2018 Land Acquisition Cases Can't Be Reopened For Grant Of Compensation With Interest: SC

**NEW DELHI, FEB 23:** The Supreme Court on Monday orally observed that pre-2018 land acquisition cases cannot be reopened for the grant of compensation with interest to the farmers whose land had been acquired under the NHAI Act.

The observation was made by a special bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan while commencing the hearing in an open court of a plea of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), seeking a review of a 2019 verdict of the top court.

The apex court, in 2019, held that the decision to grant compensation with interest to farmers whose land was acquired under the NHAI Act would apply retrospectively.

The NHAI represented by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, said the 2019 judgement imposed a huge financial burden (approximately Rs 32,000 crore) and should only apply prospectively.

The bench had previously rejected this, noting that denying such benefits violated Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution. "What perhaps weighed with your lordship was that it was Rs 100 crore," Mehta said, adding that in another judgement, the top court said that no disposed of cases will be reopened.

"The cut-off date appears to be of 2008, provided claims were alive then. Pre-2018 matters cannot be reopened. Those matters which were pending in 2008 continue. If someone in the early 2020s filed an application saying they are entitled to parity on the basis of



2008, we can say yes as the solatium but not interest, like in land acquisition matters," the CJ observed.

The bench heard the brief arguments and asked the parties to file written submissions, if any, and listed the review plea for hearing after two weeks.

On November 4 last year, the CJ-led bench had agreed to hear in open court the plea of the NHAI seeking review of its verdict.

The bench had issued a notice on the review plea and listed the matter for open court hearing on November 11, 2025.

The solicitor general had told the bench that the matter would have wide implications of around Rs 32,000 crore, and not Rs 100 crore as was stated earlier in the petition.

On February 4, 2025, the top court, while rejecting NHAI's plea, had ruled that its 2019 decision allowing the grant of compensation and interest to farmers, whose land was acquired under the NHAI Act, would apply retrospectively.

The NHAI had sought the applicability of its September 19, 2019 judgment prospectively, consequently precluding the reopening of cases

where land acquisition proceedings had already been completed and the determination of compensation attained finality.

The bench had said, "We find no merit in the contentions raised by the applicant, NHAI. We reaffirm the principles established in Tarsem Singh (2019 decision) regarding the beneficial nature of granting 'solatium' and 'interest' while emphasising the need to avoid creating unjust classifications lacking intelligible differentia. Consequently, we deem it appropriate to dismiss the present miscellaneous application."

The top court had said in its 2019 decision that Section 3J of the NHAI Act, by excluding the applicability of the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 and consequently denying solatium and interest for lands acquired under the NHAI Act, was violative of Article 14 of the Constitution.

"Regardless, the prayer in the instant application expressly seeks clarification that the decision in Tarsem Singh should be deemed to operate prospectively only.

"However, in our considered view, granting such a clarification would effectively nullify the very relief

that Tarsem Singh intended to provide, as the prospective operation of it would restore the state of affairs to the same position as it was before the decision was rendered," the bench had said.

Referring to the 2019 decision, which held Section 3J of the NHAI Act as unconstitutional, the top court had said the broader purpose behind the Tarsem Singh verdict was to resolve and put quietus upon the quagmire created by Section 3J of the NHAI Act, which led to the unequal treatment of similarly-situated persons.

"The impact of Section 3J was short-lived, owing to the applicability of the 2013 Act upon the NHAI Act from January 1, 2015. As a result, two classes of landowners emerged, devoid of any intelligible differentia: those whose lands were acquired by the NHAI between 1997 and 2015, and those whose lands were acquired otherwise," it had said.

It also said that the 2019 verdict must be viewed in the light of the principle that when a provision is declared unconstitutional, any continued disparity strikes at the core of Article 14 of the Constitution and must be rectified, particularly when such disparity affects only a select group.

The top court had clarified that the ultimate outcome of its 2019 decision was limited to granting solatium and interest to the aggrieved landowners whose lands were acquired by the NHAI between 1997 and 2015, and it did not, in any manner, direct the reopening of cases that had already attained finality. (PTI)