

9 killed as terrorists open fire at bus in J&K

JAMMU, June 9 (PTI)

NINE people were killed and 33 injured as terrorists struck a bus carrying pilgrims from Uttar Pradesh in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district on Sunday evening, opening fire on the vehicle which fell into a gorge, a senior police officer said.

The attack occurred on the bus en route from Shiv Khori temple to Mata Vaishno Devi shrine at Katra near Teryath village in the Poni area. The bus, a 53-seater, veered off the road and plunged into a deep gorge following the gunfire at around 6:15 pm.

"An unfortunate incident occurred and as per the initial reports, the terrorists had laid an ambush and opened fire on the bus which had left Shiv Khori for Katra. The driver lost balance and the vehicle fell into the gorge," Senior Superintendent of Police, Reasi, Mohita Sharma told reporters at the scene.

Sharma said the rescue operation was completed and

so far nine persons are dead and 33 others injured in the incident and they have been shifted to different hospitals.

"The identity of the deceased is not clear yet but preliminary reports suggest that they will belong to Uttar Pradesh," the officer said.

Sharma said they usually remain on high alert and have fully secured the Shiv Khori temple with frequent conduct of area domination patrols in the adjoining areas for the past many days. "We have also started firing practice for the Village Defence Guards and they all have been put on alert," the SSP said.

This attack marks a significant escalation in violence in the region, as the Reasi district had previously been relatively untouched by terrorist activities compared to neighbouring areas like Rajouri and Poonch.

Locals rushed to the site and started assisting the victims. Eyewitnesses shared harrowing accounts of the attack, with one survivor describing

how the bus was barraged with 25 to 30 shots before it plunged down the gorge.

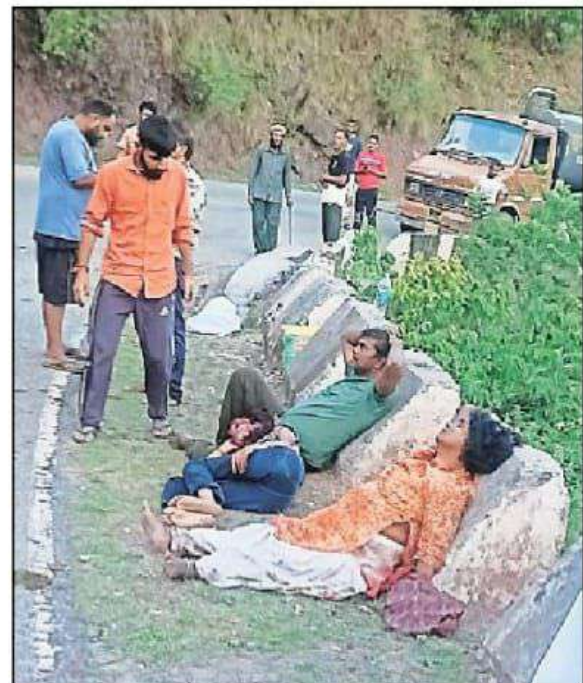
Another witness recalled seeing a masked assailant in a red muffler firing on the bus. The injured pilgrims were rushed to Teryath Hospital for treatment.

PM MODI TAKES STOCK OF SITUATION AFTER TERROR ATTACK IN J&K'S REASI:

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday took stock of the situation arising out of the terror attack on pilgrims in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir in which nine people were killed.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said the Prime Minister directed him to constantly monitor the situation and ensure all possible help to the affected families.

"The Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi took stock of the situation and directed me to constantly monitor the situation and to ensure all possible assistance to the families," Sinha said in a post on X.



Pilgrims injured after their bus plunged into a gorge following an alleged attack by suspected terrorists, in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir, on Sunday. (PTI)

Big Gains For Far-Right In EU Vote

In Germany, Hard-Right AfD Jumps To 2nd Place & Olaf Scholz's SPD Sees Its Worst Show; In France, Le Pen's Party Trounces Macron's: Exit Polls

Brussels: The far-right was seen scoring big gains in Germany and France in EU elections, opinion polls showed, joining the Netherlands in offering the first signs that an expected rightwards shift in the European Parliament is under way.

In France, Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally party won around 32% of the votes, a 10 point increase on the last EU election in 2019 and some 17 points ahead of Prez Emmanuel Macron's party, according to the first exit polls.

More mainstream conservatives were also forecast to do well across Europe, with early estimates for both groups in line with an expected broader shift in the European Parliament which covers a bloc of 450 million citizens. All this means the new European Parliament is likely to be cooler on policies to address climate change while eager to support measures to limit immigration to the EU. The parliament could also be more fragmented, which would make adopting any measure trickier and slower as the EU confronts challenges including a hostile Russia and increased industrial rivalry from China and the US.

Early exit polls showed that parties grouped in the centre-right European People's Party (EPP) were projected to remain the largest bloc across five countries, including Germany and Greece. That would put the EPP's candidate to head the European Commission, incumbent Ursula von der Leyen of Germany, in pole position

4-DAY OF VOTING ENDS, 720 SEATS AT STAKE

EU elections are held every 5 years across the 27-member bloc. This year marks the 10th parliamentary election since the first polls in 1979, and the first after Brexit. The elections started Thursday in the Netherlands and finished on Sunday, when 21 countries held their election

HOW DOES THE ELECTION WORK

- > Voting is done by direct universal suffrage in a single ballot
- > 373m people eligible to select 720 members of the parliament
- > Seats are allocated by population size: Germany has the most (96), followed by France (81), Italy (76), and Spain (61)
- > It's the second largest democratic electorate in the world - after India, reports Al Jazeera



VOTING ISSUES

- > Defence & security are the key issues in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine
- > Economy, jobs, poverty and social exclusion, public health, climate change and the future of Europe



CENTRE-RIGHT EPP MAY REMAIN KEY BLOC

Main bloc - center-right European People's Party - is likely to remain at the helm, granting Ursula von der Leyen another tenure as European Commission prez. But its 'super-grand coalition', which includes several liberal parties, will likely lose seats. Gains made by hard-right parties will force her to cut a deal with some right-wing nationalists, such as Italian PM Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy, to secure a parliamentary majority

A sharp rightward turn in the EU parliament could result in even tougher immigration rules for the bloc and a watering down of climate policies

for a second term.

In Germany, the hard-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) took second place behind conservative CDU/CSU alliance's 29.6% with 16.5% of the vote, up from 11% in 2019, according to an exit poll published by public broadcaster ARD. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Soci-

al Democrats (SPD) crashed to their worst-ever result in European Parliament elections, falling to third place. According to projections, it received around 14% of the vote, below the 15.8% they managed in 2019.

Meanwhile, in Austria, the far-right Freedom Party is the likely winner. It is the first ti-

me the group has topped a nationwide ballot in the Alpine country. In the Netherlands, exit polls showed nationalist Geert Wilders' anti-immigration party was set to win seven of the 29 Dutch seats in the EU assembly, just one short of the combined seats of a Socialist Democrat-Greens alliance. AGENCIES

14-year high! Delhi-NCR saw 32 days of 40°C+ since May 1

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MAX TO STAY ABOVE 40 DEGREES THIS WEEK

- The maximum temperature has remained above 40 degrees Celsius since May 14, making it the longest streak of blistering heat
- From May 1 to June 10, this year recorded the highest number of days when maximum temperature was above 40 degrees Celsius at 32 days in at least 14 years
- The maximum temperature is likely to stay above 40 degrees Celsius for the next seven days



New Delhi: The Delhi heat has turned weather records to ash. From May 1 to June 10, the city has seen 32 days when the temperature has been above 40 degrees Celsius. This is the highest number of days in 14 years.

From May 14 to June 10, the city has continuously seen temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius for 28 days. This too is the highest number of days in 14 years. This was clear from IMD data, gathered by TOI.

As a comparison, 2023 and 2022 saw 10 and 27 days, respectively, when the maximum temperature crossed 40 degrees Celsius during the same period.

The IMD's data available in the public domain from 2011 onwards. It shows that before 2024, no year saw the maximum temperature crossing 40 degrees Celsius consecutively for 28 days.

Even the number of such days in this streak will increase as mercury is predicted to stay above 40 degrees Celsius for the next seven days.

Delhi has seen intense heat this summer. Between May 1 and June 10 this year, some stations, such as Narela, Najafgarh, Pitampura, Mungeshpur and Jafarpur, recorded the mercury consistently above 45.

Most weather records

WHY

➤ Scanty rainfall received from March this year

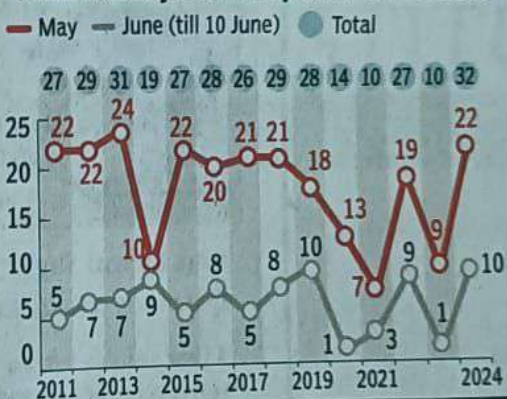
➤ Dry and warm westerly winds from Rajasthan and south Haryana

➤ Clear skies causing surface to heat up faster



Highest temperatures this season (in °C)	
Narela	49.9 (May 28)
Mungeshpur	49.9 (May 28)
Najafgarh	49.8 (May 28)
Pusa	49 (May 29)
Pitampura	48.9 (May 29)
Jafarpur	48.7 (May 29)
Safdarjung	46.8 (May 29)
Ayanagar	47.6 (May 28)
Ridge	47.5 (May 29)

Number of days with temp at 40°C and above



were broken on May 28 and 29 as many stations saw peak temperatures. The highest maximum temperature at Safdarjung was 46.8 degrees Celsius on May 29.

However, Narela and Mungeshpur recorded a maximum of 49.9 degrees Celsius each on May 28, which is the highest ever recorded in Delhi. Pitampura and Pusa saw 49.8 and 49, respectively.

IMD's data shows that this current spell of intense heat is more severe than 2013 when mercury crossed 40 degrees Celsius for 31 days.

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Experts said scanty rainfall this summer led to a high temperature. However, only 0.4 mm rainfall was logged on May 11 and May this year ended with a rain deficit of 99%. In June so far, Safdarjung has received 1.2mm rainfall and is starting at a rain deficit of 85%.

"In the absence of significant rain activity, Delhi has seen clear skies, which cause the surface heating up faster. On most days, westerly dry and

warm winds have prevailed in the city. These winds, from Rajasthan and south Haryana that are also recording high mercury, cause the temperature to rise," a Met official said.

"In the past years, rain would bring down the temperature to below 40 degrees Celsius and would provide respite to Delhiites from a spell of blistering heat. Since no intense rain is expected in the next seven days, the mercury is expected to stay on a higher side," the Met official said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

India, Pak may hold Indus talks this month

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New Delhi: India may host a Pakistan delegation this month for a meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) that looks to resolve bilateral issues through dialogue under the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT).

Pakistan was a notable omission, along with Myanmar, in the Modi 3.0 inauguration guest list that included most other immediate neighbours but the World Bank

backed Indus talks remain ring-fenced from the turbulent nature of ties which have been bereft of any substantive diplomatic engagement in the past eight years.

The two countries are currently in touch to finalise the dates for the proposed visit in the third week of this month. Under the 1960 IWT, the two sides are required to meet at least once every year, alternately in India and Pakistan. India refuses to engage Pakistan otherwise because of the latter's support

to cross-border terrorism.

If the visit happens, the delegation may also travel to J&K for talks related to IWT, which provides a framework for irrigation and hydropower development, allocating the western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) to Pakistan and the eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) to India. As the World Bank says, the Treaty also allows each country certain uses of the rivers allocated to the other.

There was a renewed interest in IWT talks last year

after India gave a notice to Pakistan for a modification of the Treaty because of the latter's "intransigence and unilateral actions" on the issue of Kishenganga and Rattle hydroelectric projects in J&K. India was upset that despite the World Bank asking both countries to find a mutually agreeable way, instead of seeking separate processes, to address Pakistan's objections to the projects, Islamabad had unilaterally sought a parallel process to address the issue.

Manipur: Situation 'tense' but 'under control' in Jiribam

IMPHAL, June 9 (PTI)

THE situation in Manipur's Jiribam district remained "tense" but "under control" on Sunday, after suspected militants torched two police outposts and at least 70 houses in a fresh bout of violence in the State, police said.

Additional security forces have been deployed in the affected areas following the incident on Saturday, they said.

"The situation is tense but under control in the wake of violent disturbances that broke out in Jiribam district in which miscreants torched two police pickets, a forest beat office... And several houses belonging to both Meitei and Kuki communities," the Manipur Police said in a statement.

More than 70 houses were set on fire in Lamtai Khunou, Dibong Khunou, Nunkhal and Begra villages, a senior police officer said.

NIA makes first arrest in January killing of four civilians in Manipur

NEW DELHI, June 9 (PTI)

THE NIA has arrested a militant currently lodged in an Assam jail for his alleged involvement in the killing of four civilians in Manipur's Bishnupur district earlier this year, the probe agency said in a statement on Sunday.

Lunminsei Kipgen alias Langimang alias Mang alias Levi, a resident of Manipur, was arrested on Saturday by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) from Central Jail, Lekhra, in Guwahati under provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Arms Act, it said.

He is the first accused to be arrested for the gruesome killings on January 18, when armed assailants brutally murdered four civilians near the water treatment plant at Ningthoukhong Kha Khunou, Bishnupur, the NIA statement said.

"The NIA on Saturday arrested one person, currently in Guwahati jail in another case, in connection with the killing of four civilians in Manipur's Bishnupur district," it added. The assailants had opened indiscriminate fire from sophisticated weapons, leading to the civilians' deaths, the probe agency said.

"Police is also actively monitoring social media updates, which may incite communal feelings amongst the communities and requests general public to refrain from spread-

ing unfounded/unverified information," it said.

Violence broke out in Jiribam in the ethnic strife-torn State on Thursday evening, after suspected militants killed a 59-

year-old man.

The person, identified as Soibam Saratkumar Singh, went missing after he had gone to his farm on June 6 and later, his body was found with wounds made by a sharp object, an official had said.

Meanwhile, an irate mob stopped a truck at Sorok Atingbi Khunou late on Saturday and reportedly torched essential commodities it was carrying, a police officer said.

A contingent of more than 70 State Police commandos was airlifted from Imphal to Jiribam to assist security personnel in their operations against militants, he said.

Around 239 Meitei people, mostly women and children, have been evacuated from peripheral areas of Jiribam on Friday, and moved to a newly set up relief camp at a multi-sports complex in the district, officials added.

The State Government has

also transferred Jiribam SP A Ghanashyam Sharma to the post of Additional Director of the Manipur Police Training College, according to an order issued by the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms. The transfer order was issued hours after police outposts of Jiri Mukh and Choto Bekra, and the Goakhal forest beat office were set afire on Saturday morning, they said.

Reacting to the incidents of fresh violence, newly elected Congress MP from the Inner Manipur Lok Sabha seat, Angomcha Bimol Akoijam, urged the Manipur Government to protect the lives and properties of the people of Jiribam. Jiribam, which has a diverse ethnic composition of Meiteis, Muslims, Nagas, Kukis and non-Manipuris, had so far remained unaffected by the ethnic strife that has been raging in the northeastern State since May last year.