

After death of 3 LeT men, J&K cops declare Baramulla militancy-free

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SRINAGAR : The J&K police on Thursday declared Baramulla town militancy free after three local Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants were gunned down in an encounter.

Police officials said that Lashkar commander Shuiab Akhoun (23) and his two associates Mohsin Mushtaq (19) and Nisar Darzi (20) were the last three listed militants in Baramulla. The police has been trying to nab the trio for the past six months.

This is not the first time when any district or town had been declared militancy free, Kulgam was declared free of militants in 1990s. On Wednesday, the trio was trapped inside an underground hideout in an orchard at a village eight kilometers from Baramulla town. Akhoun, who joined militancy in 2017 was pivotal in getting Mushtaq and Darzi into the LeT.

J&K Police spokesman Manoj Kumar said, "There is no surviving militant as on date in Baramulla." Reacting to the development, J&K Director General of Police, Dilbag Singh complimented the police for making the



■ **J&K policemen patrol near the venue for the Republic Day parade in Srinagar on Thursday**

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district militancy free.

"The Baramulla police district is now without any surviving militant. These three were the last active militants operating in Baramulla and affiliated with Lashkar-e-Taiba. We were after this group from past several months," a senior police officer said. Akhoun was a second year student when he went missing to join the militancy. His family say that it was his frequent

arrests which forced him to pick the gun. He went missing in November 2017 after his father Farooq Ahmad was taken into custody. Police said that Akhoun went to Pakistan two years ago and had received arms training from LeT.

Ahead of panchayat and local body polls held last year, Akhoun had released a video warning people of north Kashmir to stay away from the polls or face consequences.

Baramulla is a strategic district with the headquarters of Army's 19 infantry division which overlooks the Line of Control (LoC) in Uri, Gulmarg and Nowgam in north Kashmir. Baramulla is also the district where separatists enjoy support from locals. In early 2000 a group of 13 foreign militants sneaked into Baramulla and remained active for a year till they were killed in different encounters. "Baramulla is close to LoC and it's not a big deal that militants can make a comeback in the district, the separatist have good base and network in the district. Peace will return in Kashmir only if India and Pakistan will talk to each other," says Suhail Ahmad a political analyst