

SOFT TARGETS

Kashmiri Pandit employees serving in the Valley seem to have become sitting ducks for the terrorists. The recent death threat issued to them by the Lashkar-e-toiba or its frontal organization in Kashmir, once again reminds us that till the last of the gun is in Kashmir, killings of soft targets will not stop. Today, when the Pakistan-sponsored terrorism is nearly dead and the recruitment of locals into these deadly organizations is a thing of the past, they take out their frustration on soft targets be it a poor labourer from Jharkhand or a Kashmiri Pandit working in the government and forced live in security in his own land. The target list lists some names along with their telephone and mobile numbers. The authorities have advised the KP employees to stay indoors and work from home for some time, but this is hardly a solution. The police will have to track down those behind these lists and their collaborators at the soonest.

This is not the first time for such threats in Kashmir; even those KPs who had never left the Valley were targeted. While the security agencies will take care of those behind such threats and attacks. What is shocking, yet another time, is the harsh reality that Local Muslims are not protesting against this trend. If locals take out a procession condemning such threat it would build pressure on terrorists and their masters across the LOC. The silence of the majority in Kashmir is deafening. The threat to the lives of KP employee who have been given jobs in the government under a special package for their rehabilitation, is a sad reminder of similar silence in 1990 when some Hindus were shot dead after pasting ‘lists containing names of people; whom the terrorists wanted to kill. Haven’t we learned anything from history?

J&K: Unending wait for statehood

Anil Anand

August 5, 2026; the seventh anniversary of the dilution of Article 370, leading to the divesting of Jammu and Kashmir of statehood and dividing it into two Union Territories (UTs). It was an unprecedented and unmatched act in the over 70-year history of the Indian Republic. And the solemn assurance of the Union Government and ruling BJP to restore statehood at an appropriate time, made on different fora, including Parliament and the Supreme Court of India, is still waiting to be fructified. Government

There could have been no better occasion/opportunity for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to fulfil this solemn assurance than the day of the seventh anniversary. It would have better suited the grand-standing style of the current ruling dispensation, wherein dates and symbols play a great role. The solemn assurance, “Statehood would be restored to Jammu and Kashmir at an appropriate time”, is lurking in the air. Time and again, questions regarding the definition of “appropriate time”, asked on the floors of the two Houses of Parliament and outside, have been deflected by the powers that be by hiding under the cover of “security”. The ambiguity of “appropriate time-scale” has upped the index of dissatisfaction rather than satisfying curiosity, particularly among the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who are the direct beneficiaries/sufferers - depending on the prism used to view.

The solemnity of the assurance is getting diluted every day, with the Government not even ready to discuss it. There would have been no problem at all had this assurance not been given, with an intent to stick to the UT model. Then there would have been no need to restore and hold Assembly elections to provide a lame-duck democratic system two years back. The resultant dual power centre has created more confusion than solving any problem. On a more serious note, it has seriously damaged the sanctity of an elected government, with the power centres pulling in



different directions and causing serious harm to the public cause, particularly on the development scale. The dictum of “statehood at an appropriate time” would have gained some credibility had there been a continuity effect rather than reiteration of the same nature time and again, which has convinced none barring the ruling dispensation circles and their staunch supporters. One dimension of continuity would have been through bringing transparency in the actions of the Union Government relating to Jammu and Kashmir, with proper explanation, barring those related to security, to the people of the country.

On the face of it, there is a marked improvement in the security situation in the UT. Since the Centre's basic premise behind the August 5, 2019, Constitutional changes in J&K was the then-prevailing “grave” security situation, if this goal has been achieved to a satisfactory level, the rethink on the statehood issue on the seventh anniversary would have been a fitting tribute to the Narendra Modi government's own benefit.

Occasional violence, including two incidents of targeted killings of innocent citizens and police personnel on the eve of the seventh anniversary of the dilution of Article 370, raises serious questions. It also raises doubts about the timing and intent of the perpetrators and the Government's narrative of total normalcy. Five years back, the Government committed before Parliament to restoring statehood without

a definite time-frame, and repeated the assurance before the Supreme Court three years later. Meanwhile, with restoration of statehood remaining a mere charade, delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies has been allowed to proceed in an arbitrary manner, seemingly to achieve a particular political goal. Government

This has not benefitted anyone, including fulfilling the dream of the BJP of either forming a government in the UT on its own or winning a Lok Sabha seat in Kashmir Valley. But it has certainly harmed the cause of Jammu and Kashmir in its entirety a great deal. The fact of the matter is that right from August 5, 2019, the Article 370 issues were planned with a politico-electoral design. The prime motive seemed to be to pave the poll route for future battles of the ballot and not per se the betterment of J&K and its people. The net result is a terrible shortfall on economic and development scales, leaving aside political empowerment.

Flourishing tourism cannot be the only barometer to measure normalcy post August 5, 2019. It has many other dimensions which are deliberately being ignored. The prime factor should be the people's (of J&K) comfort and satisfaction, which has got a thorough beating. Although August 5, 2026, has gone by, there still exists a window of opportunity for the Union Government, provided by the ongoing Monsoon Session of Parliament. In addition to dealing with issues related to examination paper leaks and the Gen Z protests, and

the resultant police action in Delhi, an initiative should come from the topmost level in the government. They should take the Opposition into confidence to pave the way for initiating the process in Parliament for restoration of statehood. No harm if a special session of Parliament is convened for this purpose, which will also give the Narendra Modi government a new high.

Such a move will certainly not come in the category of “scaling down”, as is being made out in the case of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation. In fact, the Government will fulfil its own solemn commitment by doing so. The Union Government should not hesitate to act on this front, judging by the absence of any enthusiasm among people in both Jammu and Kashmir regions on the seventh anniversary day. Barring reactions of political parties on their stated lines, there was no public euphoria, which is also an indicator of disenchantment over unfulfilled promises related to economic upliftment, regional discrimination — particularly in relation to BJP's stronghold Jammu region - political empowerment through protection of land and job rights (on the lines of Himachal Pradesh and some other states).

The seventh anniversary also entails upon the powers that be to start serious introspection, without sitting on false prestige, regarding the real gains of the process initiated on August 5, 2019. No doubt, security and peace should be the top priority of the Government, but other issues related to regional discrimination, political empowerment and protection of basic rights cannot be overlooked and delayed any further. And even more important is to keep in mind the sentiments and feelings of people of Jammu and Kashmir. In the last seven years, this section has been totally bypassed. “How soon is soon?” The Government must reply to this question by former Home Minister P Chidambaram on the delay in restoring J-K statehood. Government

The writer is a political analyst; Views presented are personal.

WHEN PARENTS REFUSE TO LET GO

Sakshi Sethi

Every age worry about the young. Parents have always attempted to safeguard them from failure, disappointment and misery. But somewhere along the way, protection has evolved to resemble protracted supervision. Increasingly, maturity itself is being negotiated through parental intervention. Across colleges and businesses, stories are appearing of parents attending interviews, negotiating pay, contacting employers about workplace concerns or wading into situations that their adult children are expected to resolve themselves. Such incidents are typically dismissed as entertaining anecdotes. They are not. They suggest towards a larger cultural shift in how society sees independence. The phenomena is not born out of faulty parenting. It is born out of dread. Parenting

Parents now-a-days have reared children in an atmosphere of unrelenting competitiveness.

Every examination, college entrance, internship and career opportunity looks to hold life-defining repercussions. When the stakes feel impossibly high, many parents think that stepping in is an act of love



rather than meddling. They believe experience can shelter their children from mistakes they themselves once made. Yet life has never rewarded those who were shielded from every adversity. It rewards individuals who progressively learn to face uncertainty. Resilience is not inherited. It is created through uncomfortable talks, rejected applications, demanding supervisors, failed interviews and difficult decisions.

These experiences are rarely pleasant,

but they are vital. Every challenge that a parent solves on behalf of an adult discreetly deprives that young person of an opportunity to acquire confidence.

As an educator, I have experienced another consequence even before kids enter the workforce. Increasingly, teachers are expected to negotiate directly with anxious parents over matters that students themselves could easily address. Forgotten homework, classroom disagreements, project deadlines or routine feedback often become parental concerns instead of opportunities for children to communicate, reflect and take responsibility. Gradually, young people begin to believe that every obstacle requires an intermediary.

Even modern technology tools have unintentionally reinforced this dependence. Smartphones and applications track every

action, movement, decision and every setback instantly. A disappointing meeting or minor workplace disagreement no longer remains a private learning experience, in fact, it instantly becomes a family discussion, inviting advice, intervention and sometimes direct involvement.

Ironically, employers today consistently rank adaptability, initiative and problem-solving among the qualities they value most. None of these qualities emerge from a life where every difficult conversation has already been conducted by someone else. This does not mean parents should suddenly become distant observers. Guidance remains invaluable. Listening without immediately solving, advising without taking over and encouraging without controlling may be among the hardest forms of parenting. They also happen to be the most empowering.

Perhaps the ultimate measure of parenting is not how successfully we protect our children, but how confidently they learn to navigate life without us. A parent's greatest gift is the courage or bravery to let their children face the path by themselves, knowing they may stumble, recover and ultimately discover that they were capable all along.

Hasina's return and India-Bangladesh ties

Kalyani Shankar

Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, currently in exile in New Delhi, announced her intention to return to Dhaka in December 2026, despite facing a death sentence in absentia. This planned return has sparked diplomatic outrage from Prime Minister Tarique Rahman. It has also reignited national political tensions and complicated the bilateral relationship between Bangladesh and India.

Hasina, who has sought political asylum in India since 2025 following the abrupt overthrow of her government, has made a public declaration regarding her intention to return to Bangladesh by the end of this year. This announcement comes even though she has been sentenced to death by an International Crimes Tri-

bunal due to her alleged involvement in serious human rights violations during her time in office. In her statement, she expressed determination, saying, “I may be jailed, but I will return to Bangladesh by December.” Her return is expected to stir significant political tension and public interest as she prepares to face the consequences of her legal battles in her home country.

“I’m not worried about my own future. I’m worried about the future of Bangladesh. My return isn’t about power. It’s about putting Bangladesh back on the right track.” “People of Bangladesh have suffered a lot, and that’s why I decided to return,” she said.

She may face challenges such as climate change and security threats. Her ability to manage regional sta-

bility will influence regional peace and security.

In 2025, Sheikh Hasina, the long-serving Prime Minister of Bangladesh, sought asylum in India due to political turmoil and accusations of authoritarian governance in Bangladesh.

As news of Sheikh Hasina's proposed return to Bangladesh emerges, understanding its regional and national implications is crucial for grasping the future of South Asian politics.

The potential impacts of her return on Bangladesh and South Asian relations are vital for regional stability and India's strategic interests.

Sheikh Hasina has been a key figure in Bangladeshi politics, leading the Awami League party, which her father founded. Her time in office has been characterised by significant economic growth. Ousted for-



mer Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced from exile in New Delhi that she plans to return to Dhaka in December 2026, despite facing a death sentence in absentia. Her planned return has triggered diplomatic outrage from Bangladesh's government under Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, reignited national political tensions, and complicated bilateral ties with India. It has also raised concerns about hu-

man rights abuses and the suppression of political dissent. After her departure in 2025, a power vacuum emerged, leading to increased instability and allowing the opposition and various factions to gain strength. Politics

The potential return of Hasina may invigorate the Awami League, restoring party cohesion and rallying the support of loyal constituents who have remained steadfast during

her absence. Her leadership could help unify party members in confronting opposing political forces and reinstate the party's prominence within the political landscape.

Hasina's return may offer a chance for political reconciliation, helping to unify opposing factions and promote stability in Bangladesh. Hasina's administration is anticipated to focus on restoring institutional trust and resolving governance challenges. This may encompass reforms aimed at enhancing human rights conditions, ensuring the integrity of electoral processes, and promoting economic transparency. Nevertheless, the efficacy of these initiatives will depend on her capacity to navigate the prevailing political divisions.

The opposition parties, particularly the

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), may regard Hasina's return as a significant threat to the democratic process. This perception could incite increased protests and resistance, thereby complicating her capacity to lead effectively without resorting to repressive measures.

Hasina's return to power has the potential to enhance bilateral relations with India, particularly considering her historically pro-India stance. Increased cooperation on matters such as trade, immigration, and regional security may reinforce diplomatic ties and provide mutual benefits for both nations.

Hasina's political actions could strengthen alliances in the region against growing influences from China and other countries. A stable Bangladesh under Hasina

could help balance Chinese investments in the area, especially in neighbouring countries.

Bangladesh faces significant impacts from climate change. Hasina can spearhead initiatives to enhance collaboration with neighbouring countries on climate resilience strategies.

The policies implemented by Prime Minister Hasina concerning the Rohingya refugee crisis are of significant importance. A collaborative framework involving India and Myanmar may facilitate constructive solutions and influence how regional governments address migration and humanitarian challenges.

Sheikh Hasina's proposed return is a pivotal moment that could influence regional cooperation on climate change, migration, and security, shaping South Asia's future.