

"When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too."

—Paulo Coelho

Inking the Truth

INBRIEF
MP Chadha says 'silenced, not defeated'

NEW DELHI: A day after the AAP removed him as its deputy leader in Rajya Sabha, MP Raghav Chadha on Friday said that he has been "silenced, not defeated", prompting the party to launch an all-out attack, accusing him of shying away from raising his voice against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Centre in Parliament and instead engaging in "soft PR".

As he appeared to be falling out of favour with the party's leadership, Chadha vowed to hit back like a devastating 'sailab' (flood) at an opportune time.

Lambasting Chadha, AAP colleagues accused him of indulging in "soft PR" through issues like rate of samosas in airport canteens while avoiding real issues and attacking the prime minister and BJP government at the Centre.

They also slammed him with 'Jo Dar Gaya Samjho Mar Gaya' jibe (Whoever gets scared is considered dead), over the intensifying ► P11

Rajnath flags Navy's role in securing sea lanes; commissions INS Taragiri

India inducts nuclear-powered submarine Aridaman

VISAKHAPATNAM: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday highlighted the Indian Navy's indispensable role in securing commercial shipping lanes and oil tankers against emerging maritime threats, pointing out that 95 per cent of the country's trade, including energy supplies, was conducted through sea.

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony of indigenously built stealth frigate, INS Taragiri, here, he said the Navy continuously maintains its presence in the Indian Ocean—whether it is the Persian Gulf or the Malacca Strait.

He said that the commissioning of INS Taragiri will further increase the Navy's power, values and commitment.

As the fourth platform under Project 17A, Taragiri is a 6,670-tonne warship built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, Mumbai, showcasing advanced design



and engineering excellence. It comes equipped with, among others, BrahMos missiles.

The warship features a sleeker structure with a significantly reduced radar cross-section, enabling stealth operations and enhanced survivability in complex maritime environments.

In his address, Singh praised the Navy for being at the forefront during crises.

"Whenever there is a crisis, whether it is evacuation

our Navy has continuously made its active presence to ensure the smooth supply of goods. Whenever there is a situation of tension there, the Indian Navy has ensured the security of our commercial ships and oil tankers," he said.

The Indian Navy has proven that it is not only capable of protecting the interests of the country, but if necessary, can also take every step to ensure the safety of its citizens and trade routes around the world, he added.

This capability makes India a responsible maritime power, Singh said.

Citing history, he said, without strengthening the naval power, no country can be considered powerful in the right sense and therefore, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi talks about "Viksit Bharat" (developed India) by 2047, the basis of marine power becomes very important. On the indigenously built Taragiri, he ► P11

Restoring Temples isn't Religious Politics, it's Civilisational Responsibility



INKING THE TRUTH

In the ongoing Budget Session of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, a Private Member's Bill seeking restoration of temples and retrieval of encroached properties was rejected. While the legislative outcome may have closed one chapter, the underlying issue remains far from resolved.

The debate surrounding the proposed Temple Restoration Bill must be reframed beyond the narrow lens of politics and regional politics. At its core, the issue is not about religion, it is about heritage protection, property justice, and confidence-building measures in a region that has witnessed prolonged displacement and disruption in the past nearly three decades.

Over the past three decades, particularly following the migration of Kashmiri Pandits in the 1990s, hundreds of temples and associated properties have fallen into disrepair or have reportedly been encroached upon. This is not merely a statistic, it represents a civilisational vacuum, where physical structures of faith also symbolise the absence of a community.

The argument presented by the government—that existing mechanisms such as trusts and boards are sufficient—holds administrative merit but fails the test of ground reality. If the framework were indeed adequate, the scale of neglect and encroachment would not have persisted for decades.

'In J&K, the restoration is not about structure alone, it is about restoring idea of continuity'

A dedicated legal framework is not about privileging one religion over another. It is about recognising that certain historical disruptions require targeted policy responses, just as special laws exist for displaced persons, heritage conservation, or tribal rights.

Moreover, temple restoration in J&K is intrinsically linked with a larger national objective—the safe, dignified, and sustainable return of displaced communities. Without restoring the cultural and spiritual ecosystem, physical rehabilitation alone remains incomplete.

Globally, nations emerging from conflict have prioritised the restoration of cultural and religious sites as part of reconciliation and identity rebuilding. Jammu and Kashmir cannot be an exception.

It is therefore imperative that the discourse moves forward constructively. Instead of outright rejection a Private Member's Bill, a comprehensive, inclusive, and legally robust framework could be developed—one that ensures protection of all religious sites, while addressing specific historical injustices where they exist.

The Temple Restoration Bill may have been voted down in Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, but the principle it sought to uphold continues to demand attention.

Because in J&K, restoring the temples and shrines is not about the past alone, it is about rebuilding the trust for the future generations.

LG Sinha orders magisterial probe in Arhama encounter

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday ordered a magisterial probe into the encounter in Ganderbal district in which one alleged terrorist was killed by security forces.

Several mainstream leaders, including Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, had raised questions about the encounter that took place on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday.

In a post on X, Sinha said, "I have ordered a thorough and impartial magisterial inquiry into Arhama, Ganderbal incident. The



inquiry will examine all aspects related to the incident and ensure that justice is served".

The family of the slain youth -- Rashid Ahmad Mughal -- had claimed that the deceased had no links to terrorism.

Abdullah had said on Thursday

that, "I believe the claim of the family should not be dismissed out of hand. At the very least this encounter needs a transparent & time bound probe with the facts made public".

"Any attempt to obfuscate or delay the announcement of a probe will only damage credibility & that is not in anyone's interest," he had said on X.

The J-K Home Department has asked the Ganderbal district magistrate to get the inquiry conducted within seven days.

"Kindly refer to the encounter that took place at Arhama Ganderbal on 01.04.2026 resulting in the death of Raashid Ahmad Mughal S/o Late Gull Zaman ► P11

Quake tremors felt across J&K

NEW DELHI: Earthquake tremors were felt in several parts of north India on Friday night, including Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Haryana, officials said.

The tremors, which lasted a few seconds, occurred around 9:45 pm. There were no immediate reports of any damage.

An official in J-K said the quake was of 5.9 magnitude.

The epicentre of the quake was Afghanistan at a Latitude of 36.398 degrees North and a Longitude of 70.878 degrees East, the official said.

The depth of the quake was 150 km, he added.

"I felt a strong jolt which lasted for a few seconds," Baldev Chand, a Chandigarh resident who lives in a flat on the second floor, said.

Ajay Kumar, who lives on the 11th floor of a residential building in Zirakpur, Punjab, said, "The tremors lasted for a few ► P11

CAG flags J-K's non-submission of Rs 12K Cr UCs till Mar 2024

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government failed to submit utilisation certificates for grants exceeding Rs 12,000 crore received from the Centre until March 2024, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India has said.

The apex auditing body said non-submission of utilisation certificates (UCs) implies that authorities have not accounted for how the funds were utilised over the years.

"Utilisation certificates amounting to Rs 12,074.25 crore (3,663 UCs) were out-

standing indicating lack of internal control of administrative departments," the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report on finances for the financial year ended 2023-24 said.

The report indicated weak internal controls within administrative departments. It added that in the absence of these certificates, there is no assurance that the funds were used for their intended purposes.

"There is also no assurance that the intended objectives of providing these funds, advances drawn through ab-

stract contingent bills and their detailed countersigned bills were not submitted which increased the possibility of wastage and misappropriation," it said.

Further, instances of non-submission or delays in submission of accounts by government-funded bodies were observed, which deprived the legislature of the opportunity to assess their financial performance and activities.

The report also highlighted that substantial expenditure and receipts were booked under minor head "800 - other ► P11

PoJK will 'very soon reintegrate with India', says head of All India Imam Organisation

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Chief Imam of the All India Imam Organisation, Umer Ahmed Ilyasi, on Friday said Pakistan-occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoJK) would "very soon" be reintegrated with India.

"I want to say one thing to our neighbouring country from standing here in Kashmir that PoJK, which is an integral part of India, will definitely rejoin India because the people of PoJK want to have a referendum there," Ilyasi told reporters here.

He claimed that the residents of PoJK are keen to reintegrate with India, citing the development and pros-



gressing today, PoJK will be rejoined with India very soon," he said.

The chief Imam said he was very happy to see a "transformed" Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370.

"It has become a new Kashmir. Today's Kashmir has become excellent; there is prosperity throughout, and tourism has increased. The people here are prosperous. There was a time when young people and children here used to throw stones. Today, they have pens in their hands. They are studying," he said.

Referring to last year's terror attack in Baisaran meadows in ► P11

Fuel supply concerns: Centre asks States to check hoarding

NEW DELHI: The Centre has directed states and Union Territories to take strict action against hoarding and black marketing of petroleum products and LPG, amid supply concerns triggered by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Involving provisions under the Essential Commodities Act and the LPG Control Order, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) asked states to intensify enforcement, conduct daily raids and inspections in coordination with oil marketing companies, and maintain strict vigilance against diversion and misinformation, according to an official

statement.

States have also been instructed to institutionalise daily press briefings, set up control rooms and helplines, and actively counter fake news to reassure the public about fuel availability.

The move comes as the government steps up measures to ensure an uninterrupted supply of petrol, diesel and LPG across the country despite the ongoing geopolitical situation.

The government advised citizens "to avoid panic purchase of petrol and diesel as well as unnecessary booking of LPG," and cautioned against rumours, urging reliance on official ► P11

Ayodhya can become centre of India's soft power: Sinha

NEW DELHI: Ayodhya is not merely a geographical space but a symbol of India's cultural and civilisational continuity, and the holy city can become a centre of India's soft power, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said on Friday.

In his address at the Ayodhya Parv 2026 hosted at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) here, Sinha also said that amid the global volatility, the values of 'maryada' (dignity), 'dharma' (righteousness), 'kartavya' (duty), and 'tyag' (sacrifice), espoused by Lord Ram, become more relevant.

Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari, RSS leader Suresh Bhaiyaji Joshi,



and former Ayodhya MP Lallu Singh, among others, were present on the dais.

Sinha said Ayodhya as a holy town embodies India's cultural roots, and underlined that no nation can grow with-

out taking care of its "roots".

"Ayodhya is an important pillar of India's global recognition, economic power and cultural continuity," Sinha said.

He emphasised that Ayo-

dhya can become a "centre of soft power" of India, from where a message of the country's cultural richness and ethos can go out to the wider world.

"Ayodhya is not just a holy pilgrimage site for us, it is a symbol of the idea embodied in our 'sanantan' culture that no nation can become powerful without embracing its roots.

"Today, many nations, by preserving their heritage, are presenting their soft power to the world. For India, Ayodhya can become one such centre," Sinha said.

While many civilisations and cultures have been wiped off the face of the Earth, Ayodhya has stood firm ► P11

18 lakh kanals land encroached in J&K; only 29K kanals retrieved: Official data

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Over 18 lakh kanals of land are encroached across Jammu and Kashmir, with only 29,000 kanals retrieved so far from squatters, official data said.

As per official data, a total of 18,38,735.42 kanals of land have been encroached upon, including 17,22,993 kanals of state land and 1,15,742.42 kanals of forest land.

The data said encroachment entries in revenue records have been expunged. Revenue department officials said they took action under the provisions of the

Land Revenue Act to remove encroachers. However, officials termed the issue a matter of concern and said eviction drives are underway, but clarified that no fixed time-frame has been set yet. "Eviction of encroachers and retrieval of encroached state and forest land is a continuous process," they said.

Among districts, Jammu accounts for 1,45,487 kanals and 6 marlas of encroached state land, while Rajouri tops the list with 2,73,848 kanals and 12 marlas, followed by Reasi with 2,26,857 kanals and 6 marlas, it said.

Other major districts include Ramban with 1,73,832

kanals, Kathua with 1,30,403 kanals, Udhampur with 1,19,822 kanals and Poonch with 1,11,133 kanals, it said.

In Jammu and Kashmir, land is traditionally measured using units like 'kanal' and 'marla', which are part of an older system still widely used in property and agriculture. One kanal equals 20 marlas, and a kanal measures about 5,445 square feet, while one marla is approximately 272.25 square feet (though slight variations can exist locally).

In the Kashmir division, Bandipora has reported 1,53,271 kanals of encroached state land, ► P11

Suicide car bomb blast kills 5 in Pak

PESHAWAR: A suicide car bomb blast targeting a police station in northwest Pakistan killed five persons, including four from the same family, and wounded 13 others late Thursday, police said on Friday.

Police said the suicide bomber rammed his explosives-laden vehicle into the rear side of the police station in Domel tehsil of Bannu district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, triggering a powerful explosion.

The intensity of the blast, which was heard miles away, triggered panic among ► P11