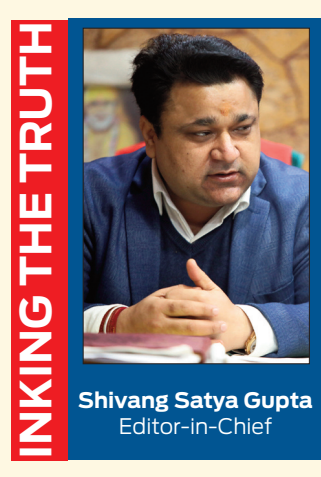


Geopolitical importance of J&K and Ladakh was well known to Hindu Maharajas of united J&K and Ladakh for India post British Rule in India



History often has a tendency to compress complex realities into simple narratives. Individuals are either elevated as heroes or reduced to scapegoats, while the larger forces shaping events fade into the background. In the case of Maharaja Hari Singh Ji, the last ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, this simplification has been particularly stark. He is frequently portrayed as indecisive at a crucial moment in 1947, or as a ruler disconnected from the political currents of his time.

But the fact of the matter is that the Hindu Maharajas of united J&K and Ladakh were well versed with the Geopolitical importance of J&K and Ladakh for India post British Rule in India.

Yet, a closer look at history reveals a far more different picture. His intervention at the Round Table Conference in 1930, where he spoke of India's dignity and its rightful place among nations, reflects a leader who was nei-

ther unaware nor indifferent. It shows a ruler conscious of sovereignty, self-respect and the broader political transformations underway. The question, then, is not merely about Hari Singh's decisions, but about the circumstances within which those decisions were made.

Jammu and Kashmir was never an ordinary princely state. Its geography alone ensured that it would be treated differently. Nestled at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia and China, the region has historically been more than just a territorial entity—it has been a strategic pivot.

Bordering regions that have long been theatres of global and regional contestation, Jammu and Kashmir was destined to be watched closely, influenced continuously and contested repeatedly. During the British colonial period, it lay on the edge of the "Great Game"—the rivalry between imperial powers for influence in Central Asia. This made the region

not just a frontier, but a buffer.

Such a location rarely allows for political neutrality or independent evolution. Instead, it invites intervention, shapes external interests and imposes constraints on internal choices. For Jammu and Kashmir, this meant that its future was never going to be determined solely by the will of its ruler or its people.

To attribute the region's prolonged instability solely to decisions taken in 1947 is to overlook decades of

geopolitical conditioning. The circumstances surrounding the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India did not emerge in isolation; they were the outcome of a long process shaped by imperial strategies and regional rivalries.

Frontier instability, for instance, was not accidental. It was often a tool used by colonial powers to maintain influence without direct control. By keeping border regions politically unsettled, imperial authorities ► P11

Govt employee arrested for receiving bribe

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Monday arrested a government employee in Kathua district for allegedly demanding a bribe, officials said.

The accused, Desh Raj, was a junior assistant in the Social Welfare Department, posted in the Billawar area of the district. He had allegedly sought Rs 10,000 from a man for releasing financial assistance under the state marriage assistance scheme for his daughter's wedding scheduled on April 16, they said.

The complainant approached the ACB, following which a discreet verification was conducted that confirmed the demand and the employee was arrested.

J&K ACB traps and arrests Des Raj, Junior Assistant, Social Welfare Department, Billawar, ► P11

Modi flags 'One Nation, One Poll', UCC as unfinished agendas of BJP

Cong keeps singing to Pak's tune: PM



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday flagged Uniform Civil Code and 'One Nation, One Election' as two of the unfinished agendas of the

BJP. He said serious discussions are taking place on them, and positive strides have been made.

Virtually addressing an event on the BJP's 47th

Probe ordered by LG into Ganderbal encounter needs swift inquiry: Omar

CM hands over job letters to 124 candidates

EARTH NEWS SERVICE



JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday refused to enter into the debate on whether a judicial or magisterial probe should be ordered into the Ganderbal encounter, and justified the probe ordered by the lieutenant governor, stating that a prompt inquiry was needed.

The Army has claimed that the man killed in the encounter in Arhama forests on March 31 -- identified as Ganderbal resident Rashid Ahmad Mughal -- was a terrorist. However, his family alleged that he had no terror links and termed the en-

counter fake, while demanding the return of his body for proper burial.

"I will not get into the debate over whether there should be a judicial probe or a magisterial probe," Abdullah told reporters in reply to a question on the issue.

Highlighting procedural delays, the chief minister said ordering a judicial inquiry of-

ten takes considerable time. "The issue with a judicial inquiry is that it takes a lot of time. First of all, sitting judges are not easily available nowadays, and the Supreme Court has also placed considerable restrictions on such appointments. Even bringing in a retired judge is not that easy," he said.

Advocating a swift process, Abdullah said, "I believe that the inquiry should be conducted without wasting time. It should be initiated immediately, and if there is truth in the matter, it should be brought before the public."

Endorsing the magisterial probe ordered by the lieutenant governor, he said, "I think the approach ► P11

NIA begins probe into arms smuggling through drones

NEW DELHI: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has launched a probe into the smuggling of arms and ammunition via drones across the India-Pakistan border, suspecting a larger conspiracy aimed at carrying out terror attacks in India, officials said on Monday.

Acting on a directive from the Union home ministry, the anti-terror agency has registered a case to investigate the alleged role of a Pakistan-based terror operative, Jasvir Chaudhary, his Indian associate Shubham Kumar and other unidentified individuals, they said.

The case was originally registered by the Punjab Police in February this year. The State Special Operations Cell (SSOC), Amritsar received credible information that on Chaudhary's directions, his Indian associates obtained a large consignment of arms, ammunition, and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) dropped via drones across the India-Pakistan border, with the intention to carry out blasts at various places in Punjab, Delhi and other parts of the country, they said. An FIR in this regard was registered by the state police on February 10.

In its order, the home ministry said the case pertains to a criminal conspiracy hatched by a "foreign element" to carry out terrorist acts in India with the use of arms, ammunition and explosives. Having regard to the gravity of the offence, its grave security ramifications, national and international linkages and the need to unearth the larger conspiracy, it is required to be investigated by the NIA, said the order, seeking probe by the federal agency. The NIA had also registered an FIR last month to probe the Punjab arms-dropping case.

Rs 1.24 Lakh Cr excess spending in J-K pending for approval since 1980: CAG

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has flagged that the Jammu and Kashmir government's spending of Rs 1.24 lakh crore spanning over four decades since 1980 has been pending for legislative approval and regularisation, which undermines the system of public resource management.

Jammu and Kashmir is yet to regularise excess expenditure amounting to over Rs 1.24 lakh crore incurred between 1980 and 2020, the CAG said in its report on the Union Territory's finances for the year ended March 2024.

Regularisation of additional spending exceeding the budgeted allocation requires approval from the state's legislative assembly.

Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh became separate Union Territories in October 2019 following the reorganisation of the erstwhile state.

"As the appropriation accounts of 1980-81 onwards had not been discussed in the public accounts committee, the excess expenditure aggregating to Rs 1,24,004.41 crore for the years 1980-81 to 2019-20 (April 1, 2019 to October 30, 2019) pertaining to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir is yet to be regularised," the report said.

The central auditor cautioned that prolonged non-regularisation of such expenditure undermines the system of budgetary and financial control and encourages financial indiscipline in the management of public resources.

Responding to the audit observations, the Finance Department of the Jammu and Kashmir government stated in February 2025 that the excess expenditure is a "legacy issue" and it would be regularised by the legislature.

The CAG report highlights decades of pending legislative scrutiny, as the Appropriation Accounts since 1980-81 have not been examined by the Public Accounts Committee, delaying the regularisation process.

"Excess expenditure remaining unregularised for extended periods vitiates the system of budgetary and financial control and ► P11

Nation's prosperity key to one's progress: RSS Chief

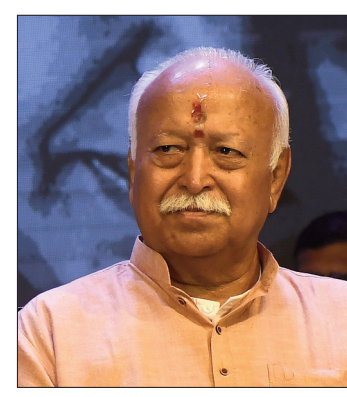
KOCHI: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Monday said individual prosperity can be achieved only when the country is prosperous and secure.

He was addressing a gathering after inaugurating a two-day convention of Balagokulam, a cultural organisation for students affiliated with the RSS, here.

Bhagwat said prosperity and security cannot be achieved in isolation.

"When the country is prosperous and safe, families too attain prosperity and security. When individuals work for the prosperity and safety of the nation, they too become prosperous," he said.

He added that people are often encouraged to contribute towards nation-building. Referring to the youth, Bhagwat said there is often



confusion over whether to focus on personal career growth or work for the country's development.

"There should be no confusion as career building and working for the nation are not contradictory. The key lies in choosing the right path," he said. As part of the ► P11

18th Meeting of UTLBC CS Dulloo calls for push in priority sector lending, labels low credit-deposit ratios



EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Expressing concern over gaps in credit flow and financial outreach, Chief Secretary Atul Dulloo on Monday urged banks operating in Jammu and Kashmir to step up lending under Priority Sector Lending (PSL) and address low credit-deposit (CD) ratios in several districts, describing the trend as a matter requiring immediate attention.

Chairing the 18th meeting of the Union Territory Level Bankers' Committee (UTLBC) in Jammu, the Chief Secretary stressed that robust credit delivery to agriculture, housing,

education and small enterprises remains central to economic expansion and job creation in the Union Territory.

He underlined that inadequate lending, particularly by private banks in agriculture and allied sectors, could impede development outcomes. Calling for full achievement of PSL targets, Dulloo said there should be "no shortfall" in extending institutional credit to priority segments.

The meeting reviewed banking performance for the first three quarters of the financial year 2025-26, ending December 31, 2025. ► P11

Traffic remains suspended on Jmu-Srg NH

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway was suspended early Monday following landslides and shooting stones triggered by rains in Ramban district, officials said.

Movement of vehicles has been stopped in both directions on the highway as landslides and shooting stones have blocked both tubes between Karol Bridge and Chanderkote, a traffic police spokesperson said.

Men and machines are working to clear the highway of slides and shooting stones.

Officials advised commuters to avoid undertaking travel on the highway until it is declared safe for vehicular movement. Stranded passengers are being ► P11

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