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Jammu and Kashmir: fresh violence and the unfinished promise of statehood

News: 18 November 2026 | Published: 18 November 2026 Mains: GS-II, federal structure and Union Territories; GS-III, internal security
Prelims: Article 370, Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019, Supreme Court verdict 2023



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Why in the news?

According to The Hindu's editorial of 18 November 2026, "Elusive peace: On Kashmir terror attack", three months of relative calm established by the security forces in Jammu and Kashmir were broken by back-to-back incidents of violence in the past six days. On 11 November, a terror attack on a CRPF-manned checkpoint in Kulgam left three jawans injured. On 16 November, a local man suspected by the police of having recently joined the terror ranks was killed after a six-day siege-like anti-terror operation in residential areas of Kulgam. In Jammu's Kishtwar, two Special Police Officers of the J&K Police were found dead with bullet wounds; the police and the Army have not fully disclosed the circumstances.

The editorial concludes that the decline in terror incidents and local recruitment - the police say local recruitment is down to single digits - should not be mistaken for peace. The Centre must begin a political outreach, starting with the much-promised restoration of statehood. The same day, India Today reported Chief Minister Omar Abdullah as saying that his government will keep working despite the limited powers of a Union Territory and will not make excuses.

Context: 2019 to now

In August 2019 most provisions of Article 370 were made inoperative and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 split the state into two Union Territories - Jammu and Kashmir (with a legislature) and Ladakh (without one). In December 2023 the Supreme Court upheld the abrogation of Article 370, while directing that statehood be restored "at the earliest" and Assembly elections be held by September 2024.

The 2024 elections saw a high turnout and produced a National Conference government; Omar Abdullah became Chief Minister in October 2024. The Assembly also passed a resolution seeking immediate restoration of statehood, but two years on there is no timeline. As a Union Territory, police and law and order remain with the Lieutenant Governor, so the elected government has no direct control over the security administration.

The federal question: accountability without power?

The Union Territory structure creates a dual framework: the elected government answers for public expectations - jobs, services, development - while key subjects like police and security lie outside its remit. According to the editorial, the elected government cannot even respond effectively to the civilian consequences of prolonged operations like the one in Kulgam, because it lacks jurisdiction.

In exam terms this is the question of "congruence between democratic accountability and power". Arrangements like Article 239A limit legislative powers; in Jammu and Kashmir's case both a court direction and political assurances are tied to statehood restoration - the delay is being read not as a mere administrative matter but as one of federal trust.

Related reading: From Article 370 to the Demand for Statehood: Jammu and Kashmir

Security and politics: complementary, not competing

The editorial argues that the security forces must stay focused on Pakistan-backed terrorism, but prolonged operations in civilian areas must not re-inflict psychological scars. The political process - restoration of statehood and empowerment of the elected government - and the security process must be complementary, not conflicting. History shows that suppression alone does not yield a lasting solution to internal-security problems; political inclusion must accompany it.

Mains analysis

Three axes: federal structure - the limits on an elected government in the UT model and the significance of the 2023 judicial direction. Internal security - not mistaking a dip in violence for durable peace; the difference between recruitment figures and civilian sentiment. Governance - the accountability deficit: power without responsibility and responsibility without power both corrode credibility and the region's political process.

Mains practice question

"Security gains in Jammu and Kashmir cannot substitute for the political process." Discuss with reference to the question of restoring statehood. (250 words)

Answer outline

Introduction:

The fresh violence of November 2026 breaking three months of calm; the editorial's plea that restoring statehood should begin the political outreach.

Main body:

Security aspect: the decline in terror incidents and local recruitment; the social cost of prolonged operations in civilian areas.

Federal aspect: the 2019 reorganisation, the 2023 judicial direction, the 2024 elections; the trust deficit from delayed restoration.

Accountability deficit: the elected government carries responsibility with limited power.

Conclusion:

Security and the political process should be complementary; restoring statehood should be seen as proof of the Centre's commitment.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What did the Supreme Court say in 2023?

In December 2023 the Supreme Court upheld the abrogation of Article 370 and directed that statehood be restored "at the earliest" and elections held by September 2024.

What is the present status of Jammu and Kashmir?

It is a Union Territory with a legislature. Since the 2024 elections there is an elected National Conference government, but police and law and order remain with the Lieutenant Governor.

What incidents occurred in November 2026?

According to the editorial: on 11 November an attack on a CRPF checkpoint in Kulgam (three jawans injured), on 16 November the killing of a suspect after a six-day operation, and in Kishtwar two SPOs found dead of bullet wounds.

Why is restoring statehood considered important?

It would give the elected government full administrative powers and assure voters that their participation matters. The editorial treats it as the political condition for durable peace. Sources: The Hindu - Elusive peace: On Kashmir terror attack (editorial, 18 November 2026) - https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/the-hindu-editoral-on-kashmir-terror-attack/article71713251.ece India Today - Omar Abdullah: J&K government will work despite limited Union Territory powers (18 November 2026) - https://www.indiatoday.in/india/jammu-and-kashmir/story/omar-abdullah-jammu-kashmir-ut-powers-governance-kathua-projects-ptag-3041160-2026-11-18

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