News, Development and Democracy in Jammu and Kashmir: A Study of Mainstream Media Discourse

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Abstract[3]

The Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has long been an arena of contested narratives. The media serves as a primary contributor to the construction of the public sphere. A review of existing literature reveals that conflict and security reportage has emerged as one of the most dominant frames in national media coverage of Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, this study examines the transformation of national print media discourse on Jammu and Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, with a particular focus on the representation of development within democratic communication frameworks. Using democratic media theory as the guiding lens and employing thematic analysis, the research analyses forty-two articles published in The Hindustan Times and The Indian Express between August 2019 and July 2023. The findings indicate a discernible shift in media focus from conflict-centric reportage to narratives foregrounding welfare, infrastructure, governance, and citizen participation. Themes such as Welfare and Progress, Infrastructure Development, Governance and Accountability, and Citizen Participation illustrate a growing alignment between media discourse and developmental priorities. However, remnants of conflict and security narratives continue to persist as legitimising frames for developmental progress. The study concludes that while national print media exhibits an emerging democratic reorientation by amplifying voices of inclusion and governance, critical engagement with dissent, long-term developmental outcomes, and diverse public perspectives remains limited. This transition marks a crucial step towards reimagining the media's democratic role in post-conflict regions like Jammu and Kashmir.

Keywords: Jammu and Kashmir, Media Discourse, Conflict and Development, National Print Media, and Democratic Media Theory

Introduction

Following the economic liberalization of the 1990s, driven by market imperatives, media organizations became enmeshed in capital-intensive business networks, with news content increasingly catering to sensational and conflict-oriented narratives that maximize audience engagement and financial returns (Belladi, 2025). It can be argued that this shift weakened the normative commitment to public service journalism. While three Cs and 1P of Journalism i.e. Crime, Cricket, Cinema and Politics continued to be the obsession of the media houses,

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development as a journalism beat was absent from the reporting domain and also from the editorials of the newsrooms. It needs to be underlined here that substantive developmental concerns of regions particularly marked by historical unrest such as Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeastern states of India witnessed a short shrift both in the media coverage and by the media scholars.

Post-partition, 'development' as a category in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in particular seems to have been absent even from the priority list of the centre and state governments. This clearly reflected in the mainstream media narratives also. Studies show that the focus of Indian media's portrayals has been more on packaging Kashmir as a commodity wrapped in conflict - people of Jammu and Kashmir for decades suffered massive alienation from the rest of the country (Bhasin, 2022). Pakistan seems to have been at the centre of how media stories were conceived across mainstream news platforms whether national dailies or national television channels. The fact that Jammu and Kashmir was a Muslim majority state, the regional media especially in the Valley seems to have concentrated more on consciously or subconsciously carrying forward the Pakistani propaganda based on the two nation theory that India illegally occupies the Jammu and Kashmir against the wishes of the people living there. Studies show that throughout the 1990s money was poured into the state through an organized mechanism to keep the state in perpetual state of conflict and violence (Jamwal, 2002).

Between 1987 and 1991, the people of Jammu and Kashmir suffered massive pitfalls of dynastic politics marked by mis governance and financial misappropriation. The rigged elections of 1987 Assembly polls in J&K saw the alliance of Farooq Abdullah's Jammu and Kashmir National Conference and Congress, led by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi come to power. The electoral malpractice and political manipulation fueled widespread resentment among the people which led to the imposition of President's Rule for 6 long years in the state - 1990 to 1996. This was a turning point in the history of this region (Jagmohan, 2017). The blatant poll manipulations of 1987 were among the several factors, including those fanned by Pakistan and its spy agency ISI, that led to widespread anger in Jammu and Kashmir and is believed to have resulted in the rise of militancy and terrorism in the Valley by 1989 (Singh, 1995). Farooq Abdullah at the behest of the Congress party at the center resorted to massive corruption depriving the people of Jammu and Kashmir basic development and denial of human rights; Blatant mis governance and corruption by the political elite became the hallmark of the NC-Congress government - it was in this governance scenario that terrorism reared its ugly head (Jagmohan, 2017). Pakistan Army and ISI seized on this opportunity, training several young separatist and Islamic fundamentalist leaders like the Yusuf Shah alias Syed Salahuddin of the Muslim United front and Yasin Malik of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front to unleash terror in the valley with a targeted Hindu genocide of the Kashmiri Pandits living there (Jagmohan, 2017). Simultaneously a terror financing system was put in place by pro-Pakistan elements from inside the valley and from across the border.

Studies show that the political economy of Jammu and Kashmir has been thriving on terror financing that percolated to large sections of the political groups, separatist groups, lawyers, media and academia. Terror financing sustained violence, Pakistani propaganda and political movements in the state, keeping the state boiling all the time. Several instances revealed local media reporting on the misappropriation of funds by state political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir (Jamwal, 2002).

It is well documented that towards the end of 1980s Jammu Kashmir witnessed massive terrorism in the garb of militancy aided and abetted by Pakistani state or Pakistan backed terrorists' groups operating out of the state with targeting killings of non-Muslim minorities like the Sikhs and Hindus. Pakistan army sustained its policy of 'bleeding India a thousand cuts' for over three decades now by training, aiding and abetting Kashmir based youth. The financing of the terrorists and support structures run by Pakistan Army and ISI controlled the narratives emanating from the valley. Islamist fundamentalism, though confined to a small section of the population there, has been at the core of terror financing. Studies show that several government employees themselves are proponents of extremist ideologies appointed with the specific motives to siphon off funds. Terror financing was also included to fund media propagating anti-India and separatist narratives (Pandya, 2023). Corruption loomed large as funds earmarked for public works projects were siphoned off to extremists, contractors and complicit government officials. Local press and news outlets were implicated in publishing extremist propaganda, all funded by the state government through loans and advertisements (Jamwal, 2002)

Post 1991, after the economic liberalization and with the opening up of the Indian markets, people in Jammu and Kashmir felt even more alienated. While India was scripting a growth story, a new generation of the Kashmiris were caught up in regular lock outs and bandhs which blocked their march to economic development (Pandya, 2023). Through sustained terror funding, Pakistan developed a nexus inside the J&K through which it utilized to pedalling false narratives such as that of 'plebicite', greater autonomy, the incomplete or no integration of the state post - partition, human rights violations by the Indian army and glorification of separatist leaders and violence spread by them.

Both regional and mainstream media stories mostly revolved around issues of violence with the portrayal reflected mostly in and around the themes such as Indo-Pak war, stone pelting, terrorist attacks, anti-India separatist acts of violence etc with opportunistic actors exploiting conflict and portraying public resistance to development initiatives (Bhasin, 2022; Bukhari, 2020). Such false narratives gathered pace where both state and national media fell prey too. News from Jammu and Kashmir became a visible commodity, amplified by the era of private television news channels. Throughout the 20th century dominant news discourse focused on perpetuating the stereotypes of J&K youth as terrorists - men wielding guns - and later as - men wielding stones.

Mainstream journalists from New Delhi often admit off record that in the past national media often gave more space to the narratives peddled by the organized Pakistani nexus that flourished in the valley. The central government's political discourse has also always structured the news construction by the mainstream media. The dominant news discourse in national mainstream media seems to have been delicately treading the path of balancing the information coming from the valley depending on New Delhi's political agenda. What was absent as a priority both for the Centre and the state was 'development'. Consequently, 'development 'as a category in journalistic content remained absent. The news narratives in and around healthcare, education, infrastructure development, trade and tourism etc had very little or no media coverage. However, 2016 marks a significant shift in the Centre's approach towards the complex character of this conflict-ridden state. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) disrupted the status-quo in Jammu and Kashmir with its development discourse.

A significant policy intervention occurred with the constitutional reforms that came about in 2019. Through the amendments to Article 370 along with the abrogation of Article 35 A, Government of India made all the provisions of the Constitution applicable to Jammu and Kashmir. The central government aimed to integrate the region more closely into India's national developmental framework, extending central laws and welfare schemes to its residents (Awasthi, 2020). Since the policy change, a range of initiatives have been implemented, including the Aapki Zameen Aapki Nigrani land record digitization program, the JK Samadhan grievance redressal platform, and reservation policies targeting marginalized communities. Investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and digital governance have been prioritized with the objective of promoting inclusive growth and strengthening accountable institutions (Organiser, 2020; KNS, 2023; GK Web Desk, 2024). However, welfare programs in areas such as infrastructure, healthcare, and education are often framed with skepticism, limiting their acceptance and impact. Government efforts, irrespective of their genuine intent, have struggled to gain public traction due to perception gaps and the amplification of negative narratives by stakeholders benefiting from prolonged instability (Utpal, 2023). In this transformed policy environment, the role of the media becomes even more consequential. The framing of development initiatives in public discourse not only shapes citizen perceptions but also influences the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance interventions in historically contested regions.

This study, therefore, seeks to explore the content, structure and form of the media portrayals of development in Jammu and Kashmir following constitutional amendments in Article 370. Through a systematic analysis of how two mainstream digital news outlets represent the post-2019 developmental initiatives. This research aims to firstly assess the nature of themes that dominate media reporting on Jammu and Kashmir; secondly, whether media discourse continues to prioritize conflict narratives or reflects an emergent reorientation toward governance, welfare, and citizen-centric progress and thirdly, how does the media perform its democratic role of providing information about development to citizens?

Review of Literature

News reporting in J&K before 2019 has been deeply embedded in the political economy of conflict. For the past three decades, Kashmir has remained particularly vulnerable to sustained propaganda disseminated both by separatist groups and segments of mainstream political actors who, at times, tacitly endorsed separatist narratives (Sumit Ganguly, 1997). Such discourses and publications were appropriated by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and by militant organizations espousing diverse ideological positions, with the strategic objective of persuading the people of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in the Valley, that Kashmir is inherently distinct from India (Swami, 2007; Schofield, 2010). This persistent narrative reinforced separatist sentiment and contributed to the consolidation of insurgent bases across the region. (Jalali, 2019).

International reporting on Kashmir also leaned heavily towards conflict frames, often portraying the Valley as a hotbed of insurgency while neglecting governance and social issues (Schofield, 2010; Ray, 2004; Zaheer, 2016). For instance, The New York Times described the Valley as "a Muslim region seeking independence from predominantly Hindu India…engulfed by a storm of violence" (Gargan, 1993, p. 1, cited in Ray, 2004, p. 99). Such portrayals reinforced the idea of Kashmir as a communal and violent flashpoint, foregrounding identity and legitimacy struggles while marginalizing everyday developmental concerns.

Meanwhile, Scholars like Kaul & Saxena (2022), highlight how the overemphasis on violence shaped external perceptions, reinforcing stereotypes about Kashmir as a perpetual security problem; adding that the media appears to ignore the human cost of violence in terms of education and development. Kashmir conflict is projected mostly as a law-and-order problem where stakeholders are primarily the government agencies and militants.

News Reporting on Development in Jammu & Kashmir

Development narratives prior to 2019 were fragmented and often subordinated to the overarching conflict discourse. Peer-reviewed studies suggest that development was typically reported in two ways: as a victim of unrest or as a political tool used by successive governments to signal normalcy (Bose, 2003). For example, tourism was frequently framed as the first casualty of violence: reports from 1991 onwards documented kidnappings and the collapse of visitor numbers (Coll, 1991), and news coverage around the 2016–17 Burhan Wani terror recorded mass cancellations and near-zero hotel occupancy (Kashmir Post, 2016; Wani, 2017).

Infrastructure projects in Kashmir, such as road and power developments, often receive episodic media coverage during inaugurations or crises, with limited follow-up on outcomes. For instance, a study on rural issues in print media found that during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jammu and Kashmir in April 2022, coverage of rural issues in leading English dailies was minimal, indicating a focus on selective development initiatives rather than comprehensive reporting on outcomes (Kumar et al., 2025). Therefore, when reported, development issues are

frequently politicized, serving as evidence for or against the efficacy of particular governments (Utpal, 2023).

Before 2019, successive state governments, often in alliance with national parties, highlighted selective development initiatives while downplaying failures; particularly the absence of substantial work in favour of minorities (Sikhs, Pahari, and Gujjar) by the state government to make them feel more accepted (Bali, 2023). This selective amplification was reproduced in media reporting, resulting in a skewed portrayal of progress (Bhan, 2013). Civil-society and academic critiques of stalled projects or inequitable benefits rarely translated into mainstream coverage.

Meanwhile, the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A was met with skepticism and resistance in sections of the state media (Sethi, 2019; State Times, 2019). Commentaries variously cautioned against the potentially disastrous consequences of the decision, questioned its constitutional legitimacy (Prasad, 2019), and framed it through a communal lens that reinforced an "us versus them" dichotomy (Ahmed, 2019; Syed, 2019). In some narratives, the move was portrayed as the "beginning of the end," thereby invoking a discourse of crisis and uncertainty (Bhasin, 2019). Such framings align with a broader political economy of conflict, wherein narratives of tension and ambiguity sustain the interests of actors who derive material and symbolic benefits from prolonged instability.

At the same time, scholarship on democratic theory and communication has consistently argued that media must play a central role in enabling democracy by providing accurate information, facilitating plural voices, and ensuring public accountability (McQuail, 2000; Christians et al., 2009). The absence of such a democratic orientation in Jammu and Kashmir media reporting weakened the scope for informed citizen participation and narrowed the possibilities for inclusive development discourse. In conflict-affected societies, this failure is particularly consequential, as media has the potential either to reinforce cycles of violence or to support peacebuilding and democratic governance (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005).

The literature indicates that, prior to 2019, the media ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir was predominantly oriented towards conflict-centric reportage, while developmental issues received only sporadic and often politicised attention (Kaul & Saxena, 2022). Local newsrooms operated within structural constraints shaped by external pressures, including separatist influence and transnational agendas, that curtailed editorial autonomy and limited the scope of investigative journalism (Schofield, 2010). In such representations, developmental initiatives were routinely subordinated to law-and-order concerns, while alternative rights-based perspectives on development remained largely marginalized within mainstream discourse.

Theoretical Framework

This research is guided by democratic media theory, which posits that the media is not merely a channel of information but a central institution of democratic life. The theory highlights the responsibilities of the media to inform citizens, encourage deliberation, provide accountability, and ensure the inclusion of marginalized voices (McQuail, 2000; Curran, 2011). Unlike commercial or authoritarian models, democratic media theory emphasises the primacy of public interest over market-driven or state-controlled imperatives.

Within the context of Jammu and Kashmir, this framework enables an examination of whether news coverage after 2019 reflects a transition from conflict-dominated narratives to reporting that fulfills democratic obligations. The study specifically interrogates whether the media provides substantive information about development, whether it includes voices from marginalized groups such as women, youth, and rural communities, and whether it scrutinises governance and public policy with a view to enabling citizen participation. By applying this theoretical framework, the study shifts attention from questions of framing to broader questions of democratic function and responsibility in media practice.

Research Questions and Objectives

While few scholarly writings have explored discursive construction of 'development' in Jammu and Kashmir, this study examines meanings of 'development' through the lens of democratic media theory in the contemporary context of post Article 370's abrogation. The following are the research questions and objectives of the study:

- RQ1. What themes dominate media reporting on development in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370?
- RO1. To identify the dominant themes in development reporting in Jammu and Kashmir after 2019.
- RQ2. How does the media perform its democratic role of providing information about development to citizens?
- RO2. To assess whether media coverage reflects a democratic reorientation from conflict-oriented narratives to development-oriented reporting.
- RQ3. In what ways does media reporting represent governance and accountability in the context of development?
- RO3. To examine how governance and accountability are represented in development-related media discourse.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design using thematic analysis to examine how development is reported in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370. Thematic analysis is well suited for this inquiry as it allows the identification of recurring

patterns and underlying meanings in media texts while remaining flexible enough to capture both manifest and latent dimensions of discourse (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Sampling was purposive at two levels. First, mainstream digital news portals and websites (Hindustan Times and Indian Express) were selected on the basis of their reach, credibility, and frequency of reporting on development-related issues. Second, a manual keyword search using terms such as "Jammu and Kashmir development news," "abrogation of Article 370 and development," "education in Jammu and Kashmir-370," and "health-Jammu and Kashmir-370" was conducted to retrieve relevant coverage. This process yielded a total of forty-two articles published between August 2019 and July 2023. Each article, from headline to closing paragraph, was treated as a discrete unit of analysis, with the study focusing exclusively on written text and excluding visual materials.

The analysis followed the six stages outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data was first familiarised through repeated readings of the selected articles. Initial codes were generated inductively to capture meaningful features of the text. These codes were then collated into broader categories, which were refined through iterative engagement with the data to identify overarching themes. The emergent themes included conflict and security, welfare and progress, infrastructure development, governance and accountability, and citizen participation. These themes provided the basis for interpreting the role of media in representing development within the broader framework of democratic media theory. In doing so, the study evaluates whether post-2019 reporting in Jammu and Kashmir reflects a democratic reorientation that prioritises information, inclusivity, and accountability in public communication.

Findings and Analysis

Our analysis of the articles from Hindustan Times and Indian Express between August 2019 and July 2023 reveals five dominant themes: Conflict and Security; Welfare and Progress; Infrastructure Development; Governance and Accountability; and Citizen Participation. Each theme is characterized by recurring patterns of emphasis, exemplars, statistics, and key phrases that collectively shape how development in Jammu and Kashmir is portrayed in the post-abrogation period.

The Conflict and Security theme persists across both newspapers, though it has been reframed to support narratives of stabilization and peace rather than unrest. In Hindustan Times, references to declining militant activity and reduced civilian casualties are frequently highlighted. For instance, one article reports that "there has been a 600 percent decline in law and order incidents between three years before August 5, 2019 and three years after the abrogation." Likewise another article underscored "incidents of terrorism have dropped by seventy five percent." Meanwhile, another emphasizes that "stone pelting has become a thing of the past" (Gupta, 2022; Anand, 2023; HT, 2024). Similarly, Indian Express presents statistical accounts, "a total of two thousand and eighty one civilians were killed from 2004 to 2014, averaging two hundred and

eight per year, whereas from 2014 to 2021, only two hundred and thirty nine civilians lost their lives, averaging thirty per year" (Sharma, 2021). These examples are paired with appeals to national integration and security improvement, reinforcing the idea that development is contingent upon peace and order.

The Welfare and Progress theme emerges as one of the most prominent in both newspapers, where state-led interventions aimed at improving livelihoods and living conditions are framed as signals of renewal and hope. Hindustan Times reports extensively on employment drives and educational initiatives, such as the distribution of appointment orders to newly recruited officials and efforts to address the welfare of marginalized groups like Gujjars and Paharis (HT Correspondent, 2023; HT, 2024; Khajuria, 2024). In parallel, Indian Express features examples from programs like the "Back to Village" initiative, highlighting that "about fourteen thousand school dropouts re-joined education with assurances of quality learning" (Express, 2022). Health interventions are similarly foregrounded, with reports of "over ninety-five thousand health insurance cards issued," illustrating how welfare schemes are deployed to foster trust and inclusion (Express, 2022). Exemplars such as testimonies from beneficiaries, catchphrases like "inclusive development," and appeals to equity create a narrative that development is both transformative and far reaching.

Infrastructure Development is consistently presented as a key axis of progress, with emphasis on connectivity, mobility, and public services. Hindustan Times articles detail investments such as the "launch of electric train services" and "foundation stones for hydroelectric projects," which are accompanied by statistics on financial allocations exceeding thirty-two thousand crore rupees (Saxena, 2020; HT News Desk, 2023; Khajuria, 2024). Meanwhile, Indian Express frequently reports on the restoration of communication networks, such as the "resumption of 4G services after eighteen months," and large-scale educational infrastructure reforms like the introduction of uniform assessments across schools. Exemplars in this theme include project inauguration ceremonies, statements by government officials, and community participation in development drives, reinforcing infrastructure as both a symbolic and practical marker of normalcy and integration.

The Governance and Accountability theme focuses on administrative reforms and transparency measures intended to make governance more participatory and citizen centric. Hindustan Times emphasizes governance initiatives such as "elections to over thirty thousand panchayat seats" and "ensuring equal access to welfare for women and youth," while Indian Express features reforms like the "Student Assessment and Evaluation Scheme" aimed at enhancing educational standards. Appeals to principles such as fairness and equal opportunity are combined with exemplars, interviews with local leaders, the establishment of grievance portals, and outreach meetings with community members, to present governance as accountable and responsive.

Citizen Participation is framed as a mechanism for strengthening democracy and local empowerment. Across both newspapers, examples of community driven initiatives are prevalent. Hindustan Times covers how youth clubs with "forty five thousand members" are involved in skill training and social service, while Indian Express reports how "over one lakh and fifty five thousand e-challans were issued to streamline transactions." Students returning to school after prolonged closures and interviews with rural residents receiving government aid serve as examples that humanize participatory governance. Appeals to inclusivity and empowerment are woven into narratives that suggest citizens are key agents in transforming the region, although the scope of such participation is frequently framed within government-led initiatives rather than grassroots activism.

Discussion

The analysis of the selected articles from Hindustan Times and Indian Express reveals a significant shift in media reporting on Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370. Prior to 2019, the media ecosystem in the region was predominantly focused on conflict, insurgency, and law and order challenges, as documented by Ganguly (1997), Swami (2007), and Schofield (2010). Separatist narratives, militant activities, and communal tensions were the primary frames used to describe the situation in the Valley, often sidelining issues related to education, health, and infrastructure. International coverage, as noted by Ray (2004) and Zaheer (2016), reinforced this portrayal by focusing on violence and political turmoil.

In contrast, the post 2019 media narratives in both newspapers' reportage places considerable emphasis on themes such as infrastructure expansion, social welfare schemes, educational revival, and grassroots governance. For instance, the Hindustan Times reports on major developmental projects worth thirty-two thousand crore rupees, the launch of electric train services, and recruitment drives for government officials. Similarly, the Indian Express highlights the restoration of high-speed internet services, implementation of new educational schemes, and self-employment initiatives aimed at marginalised groups.

This shift aligns with the theoretical underpinnings of democratic media theory proposed by McQuail (2000), which stresses that media should serve as a platform for public deliberation, informed citizenship, and accountability. By covering welfare initiatives, state led reforms, and community outreach programs, the media appears to be fulfilling its democratic role.

The evidence also demonstrates that while the discourse of conflict has not disappeared entirely, its role has shifted to the background. References to militancy and law and order now often appear as contextual details that legitimate the claim of developmental progress. For example, one article reports that "incidents of terrorism have dropped by seventy five percent," while another emphasizes that "stone pelting has become a thing of the past." Nevertheless, the analysis also reveals limitations in the extent to which dissenting voices are incorporated into the

discourse. This partial alignment with democratic ideals raises important questions about the evolving role of media in conflict affected societies.

Conclusion

Post-2019 reportage, particularly in Hindustan Times and Indian Express, suggests a deliberate departure from the past media coverage. Development projects, welfare schemes, and infrastructure upgrades are consistently presented as markers of renewal and progress. Citizens are increasingly depicted as active participants in governance processes rather than as passive victims of unrest. The coverage of youth empowerment programs, scholarship schemes, and healthcare initiatives illustrates a more inclusive approach that brings marginalized communities such as Gujjars and Pahari into the narrative. The restoration of high-speed internet, expansion of educational infrastructure, and emphasis on local governance structures are framed not merely as policy decisions but as milestones of integration and normalisation. Such narratives resonate with the principles of democratic media theory, where the media is tasked with amplifying citizen voices and strengthening public engagement in governance. At the same time, the conclusion must recognize the continuities and limitations that persist. Statistical claims of reduced violence or improved services are frequently cited as evidence of progress, therefore, in similar fashion follow-up on long-term results and continuities will paint a much larger picture of development discourse in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, underscoring success and failure of governance.

In conclusion, the evolution of reporting from conflict to development themes offers a glimmer of hope for the future of democratic communication in Jammu and Kashmir. By cantering governance, welfare, and citizen participation, the media is beginning to reclaim its role as a facilitator of nation-building and public trust. However, for this transformation to be meaningful and sustainable, greater editorial independence, critical engagement with governance outcomes, and the inclusion of diverse perspectives are essential. Only then can the media fully transcend its legacy of conflict-centric reporting and fulfil its democratic duty of fostering informed citizenship and inclusive development in one of India's most sensitive and complex regions.

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