

Pahalgam Attack 2025

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Pahalgam Attack 2025: A Setback to Kashmir's Path of Peace

Context:

Despite significant progress in normalcy and tourism post the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, a devastating terrorist attack in Baisaran Valley, Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir, has shaken public confidence. The killing of 28 people, mostly tourists, marks a serious setback to the region's peace-building efforts and poses a renewed challenge to India's internal security architecture.

The Attack: What Happened?

- **Location:** Baisaran Valley, 5 km from Pahalgam, in Anantnag district, J&K.
 - **Casualties:** 28 people killed, mostly domestic tourists.
 - **Accessibility Challenge:** The area is **high-altitude and motor-inaccessible**, reachable only by **foot or horseback**, making **rescue operations extremely difficult**.
 - **Perpetrators:** The **Resistance Front (TRF)**, a proxy of **Lashkar-e-Taiba**, claimed responsibility.
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Pahalgam: An Overview

- **Region:** Located in **southern Kashmir**, ~90 km from **Srinagar Airport**.
- **Significance:** A major **tourism and pilgrimage** hub, popular for its natural beauty and religious sites.

Key Tourist Attractions:

- **Amarnath Cave Temple** - A sacred Hindu shrine.
 - **Betaab Valley** - Named after the 1983 Bollywood movie.
 - **Aru Wildlife Sanctuary** - Hosts rare species like the **Himalayan brown bear**.
 - **Tulian Lake** - Alpine lake, popular among trekkers.
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Baisaran Valley: The 'Mini Switzerland' of Kashmir

- **Distance from Pahalgam:** About **5 km**, accessible only on foot or pony.
 - **Landscape:** Lush meadows, pine forests, and snow-covered peaks.
 - **Tourism Significance:** Acts as a **base camp for trekkers** heading to Tulian Lake.
 - **Nickname:** Called "**Mini Switzerland**" for its European-like landscape.
 - **Year-Round Destination:** Attracts tourists in both **summer and winter seasons**.
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The Resistance Front (TRF): A Proxy Militant Outfit

Origins and Evolution

- Formed shortly after **Article 370 abrogation (August 2019)**.
- A proxy of **Lashkar-e-Taiba**, backed by **Pakistan's ISI**.
- Active in recruiting and radicalizing youth via **social media campaigns**.

Government Response

- Declared a **terrorist organization** under the **UAPA** in **January 2023** by the **Ministry of**

Home Affairs.

- Cited for inciting violence and spreading **anti-India propaganda**.

Notable Attacks by TRF

- Targeted **tourists, migrant workers, and minority communities**.
 - Focused on **destabilizing the Valley** and derailing the peace narrative.
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Strategic Implications of the Pahalgam Attack

1. Challenge to Normalcy Post-Article 370

- Post-2019, J&K witnessed:
 - **Decline in terror incidents**.
 - **Record tourism** (over 1.8 crore visitors in 2023).
- The attack **shatters the perception of peace** and security.

2. Targeting of Economic Revival

- **Tourism** was seen as a symbol of **economic and social integration**.
- Attack aimed at **undermining investor confidence** and reviving fear.

3. Strategic Timing

- Incident occurred during:
 - Visit of **US Vice President JD Vance** to India.
 - **PM Modi's diplomatic trip to Saudi Arabia**.
- Reflects past patterns of **timing attacks to gain global attention**:

- **March 2000:** 36 Sikhs massacred before **President Clinton's visit**.
 - **May 2002:** **Kaluchak attack** during US official **Christina Rocca's visit**.
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Geopolitical Undertones

- Attack followed provocative rhetoric from **Pakistan Army Chief Gen. Asim Munir**, who referred to **Kashmir as Pakistan's "jugular vein."**
 - Signifies Pakistan's continued **psychological warfare** and **proxy engagement** through non-state actors.
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Conclusion: A Wake-Up Call for India's Internal Security

The Pahalgam attack is a stark reminder that **peace in Jammu & Kashmir remains fragile**. Despite development initiatives and diplomatic engagements, **cross-border terror networks and proxy outfits** like TRF continue to pose threats.

Policy Recommendations:

- **Strengthen border intelligence and surveillance.**
- **Boost infrastructure** in tourist-prone, high-risk zones.
- **Promote community vigilance** and counter-radicalization measures.
- Sustain **diplomatic efforts** to isolate Pakistan internationally on terror financing.

