

OMAR'S ONE YEAR IN OFFICE – NEXT FOUR ARE MORE CHALLENGING



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The Omar Abdullah government completed one year in office on Thursday – October 16, 2025. It is a moment of truth for Chief Minister to reckon with and come out with answers how much difference the government has made to the lives of people of Jammu and Kashmir.

One year is gone, four more years are left for his government before it goes back to the people, but the real challenge is to save rest of the innings from wicket-hits and no balls. His position is unenviable at the moment; he should work harder to make it enviable. He has come to know how the system works or doesn't that should be guiding light for him and the government.

Perhaps, Omar had little or no idea what he is up against when he took over as head of the government mandated by a popular vote. He had not operated in a UT set up ever before. Restrictions on powers of the government were the painful feature for him, and the task became harder when he looked back at the promises he had made to the people – Paradise regained.

There were two parts of NC's manifesto: the political one in which the party promised to work for the restoration of the special status that the state had lost with the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, and to restore the statehood. J&K had lost its statehood when it was divided into two UTs, Ladakh was separated from it and its status demoted to UT.



The other part was on developmental side – taking care of the unemployment by advertising all the vacant posts in the government departments, free ration, free cylinders and so many other things. Such manifestoes have inherent weaknesses and always upheld more in breach than in implementation. Now, the political part has become an albatross around neck. While the restoration of Article 370 looks remote, rather impossible, the statehood has become more distant than it was when the government took over around this time last year.

A biting reality was that he was heading the government in the UT status, where his government's powers were further curtailed as the gray areas were occupied by the powers that had ruled the territory for five-years. Omar could have played his cards in a better fashion. He missed the bus as there were events that unfolded with him looking at them as a spectator. One of them and the most defining was the massacre of 26 innocent civilians in Pahalgam in April this year.

Omar's attempts to navigate the crisis inflicted by Pakistani terrorists in Pahalgam with sagacity were not appreciated in the manner those should have been. We are aware that some of the narrators blamed the Pahalgam tragedy to the elections- this was completely absurd view, but there is no armoury against the tide of ignorance on the part of those who want to perpetuate a thesis that Kashmir, despite having been integrated fully into the Indian union after abrogation of Article 370, continues to be under the influence of subversives.

Omar himself listed three major things that made his first year in office a difficult venture – (a) Pahalgam, (b) Indo-Pak conflict and intense four-day war and its fall out across J&K, and (c) floods that devastated highways and economy besides creating additional burden of providing relief and ensuring rehabilitation of the affected population .

It's important for Omar Abdullah to look back at the year that has passed, understand the real dynamics of the terrain, environment and politics. His task is to ensure that rest of the four years of his government are not what the last one was.



One year is gone, four more years are left for his government before it goes back to the people, but the real challenge is to save rest of the innings from wicket-hits and no balls. His position is unenviable at the moment; he should work harder to make it enviable. He has come to know how the system works or doesn't that should be guiding light for him and the government.

If he looks at the things, the idea of India and the democracy and its benefits for the masses has not progressed as it should have. He should have positioned not only as a Chief Minister of the Government , driven by NC's agenda – fulfilled or otherwise- but as a leader who could have changed the perception of Kashmir and that of the rest of the nation for the UT. As a leader bestowed with lot of experience, intelligence and articulation, he could have become a pivot for improving the lot of the people and fostering of very good relations with Delhi as Omar Abdullah and not like other leaders in other states. He should stand his ground but should also not lose sight that this is the much different one that he had inherited as Chief Minister in January 2009. He knows the difference and he should consolidate it. That's the real task before him.