

ಪತ್ರಿಕಾ ಕಡತಗಳು  
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**J&K wakes up to new status,  
 officially ceases to be a state**

**LGs For Two  
 New UTs To Be  
 Sworn In Today**

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: At the stroke of midnight, Jammu & Kashmir ceased to be a state of the Union, making way for two new Union territories of J&K and Ladakh. This marks an important milestone in the history of J&K and, especially, Kashmir Valley's tense ties with the rest of the country, and culminates the process which started on August 5 with the landmark announcement for emasculation of Article 370 as well as end of statehood for J&K.

This also put to an end to J&K's flag and constitution, symbols of the state's special status. With October 31 fixed

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as the appointed day for reorganisation of J&K, the new lieutenant governors of the two UTs -- G C Murmu in J&K and R K Mathur in Ladakh -- will be sworn in at separate ceremonies in Srinagar and Leh, respectively.

The creation of the UTs of J&K and Ladakh coincides with the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, credited with the merger of over 560 states with the Indian Union and who has been promoted by the Modi government as the embodiment of national unity and muscular nationalism. The change in the status of J&K comes even as there is a fresh spate of targeted attacks in the Valley against non-Kashmiris.

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LONELY VIGIL: A paramilitary jawan stands guard on a deserted road in Srinagar on Wednesday, a few hours before J&K's bifurcation

**Former SPOs behind  
 orchard killings?**

Former SPOs Syed Naveed Mushtaq and Rahil Magray, who had abruptly quit J&K police in 2017 and joined Hizbul Mujahideen, are suspected in the recent killings in Shopian and Pulwama apple orchards that included a Punjab-based apple trader, a truck driver and a labourer. P 6

**Hizb likely executed  
 5 Bengal labourers**

Hizbul Mujahideen is likely to be behind Tuesday's killing of five labourers from Bengal in Kulgam. The terrorist behind the killing of a Katra truck driver on Monday, who was himself eliminated by J&K police the same day, was also identified as a Hizb operative, Aijaz Ahmad Malik. P 6

**EU MPs blame Pakistan for terror,  
 say Art 370 India's internal matter**

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Srinagar: The 23-member delegation of European Union lawmakers blamed Pakistan on Wednesday for terrorism in India. Wrapping up their two-day Kashmir visit, they said the nullification of Article 370 was India's "internal matter" and that they stood by India in its fight against terrorism.

Predominantly from far-right parties, they said on the last day of Jammu & Kash-

mir's existence as a state that terrorism was a "severe problem" in Kashmir. At the stroke of midnight on Wednesday, the state of J&K will be bifurcated into the Union territories of J&K and of Ladakh.

The organisers of the MEPs' Kashmir visit had invited a select group of journalists to a press briefing, including the editors of three lesser-known local newspapers.

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# Situation in J&K not as bad as we thought, say MEPs

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Only a few of these journalists were allowed to put questions to four MEPs — Bill Newton Dunn from the UK, Henri Malosse from France, Ryszard Czarnecki from Poland, and Thierry Mariani from France.

Only three of the 23 MEPs belonged to Left or liberal parties. "If we talk about Article 370, it is India's internal matter. What concerns us is terrorism, which is a global menace and we should stand with India in fighting it," Malosse told the journalists at Srinagar's Old Airfield at Rangreth.

The EU lawmakers said they interacted with the youth, politicians, women and traders during their two-day stay in Kashmir, adding that it was the "beginning of their engagement" with civil society there. "We are here to get information. The situation is not as bad as we thought. People here want peace, a better life and better vocations, and they want jobs. Terrorism has destroyed such dreams," they said.

The MEPs, while regretting the killing of five labourers from West Bengal by militants in Kulgam district on Tuesday evening, said "terrorism is a severe problem in

**The EU lawmakers said they interacted with the youth, politicians, women and traders during their two-day stay in Kashmir**

Kashmir" and named Pakistan as its source.

Newton Dunn of the UK said they belong to Europe which is now peaceful after years of fighting. "And we want to see India becoming the most peaceful country in the world. And for that we need to stand by India in its fight against global terrorism. This visit has been an eye-opener and we would definitely advocate what we have seen at ground zero," he said.

Referring to the details provided to them by the Indian Army and police, Dunn said, "Most terrorists killed in J&K have come from abroad. In fact, they came from Pakistan. It is an international problem. All protests should be directed against terrorism."

Ryszard Czarnecki from Poland said, "The international media coverage (on Kashmir) seems to be biased. Once we go back to our countries we will inform them of what we saw." The MEPs also criticised Pakistan for violence against the Christian community there.

## Politicians in J&K can now only hope for statehood

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Parliament's decision of August 5 marked a dramatic turn in the history of the sensitive region, a counter-punch to a defiant clamour for enhanced autonomy and a brutal Pakistan-backed terror campaign. It came against the backdrop of a popular push in the rest of the country for a tough response to terrorism and separatists. It also represented a powerful break from the way the Centre had dealt with the border state. The old approach sought to blend toughness towards terrorists with promises to enhance autonomy and talks with Pakistan, which made no secret of its determination to grab the Muslim-majority province.

The Modi government changed the terms of engagement with both the separatists and Pakistan. The conversion of the state into two UTs means that politicians in J&K can, at most, hope for restoration of statehood. The August decision also means that Pakistan will have to try hard to re-establish its locus on J&K as and when the two sides decide to resume negotiations.