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PAPER CLIPPINGS

ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ: DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: Other state matters

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: Times of India

ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE: 1/11/2019

## Two new UTs, two different emotions

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**Srinagar/Leh:** Ghulam Ahmed Lone, an 88-year-old resident of Abi Guzar in Srinagar, woke up on Thursday with "a feeling of emptiness" that he struggled to articulate. "I can't quite tell you how, but it seems like our lives have been inexorably altered," he said. "No other part of India has had a journey like ours over the past 70 years."

From Srinagar to Kargil, separated by just over 200km but no longer yoked together as part of one state, near-empty streets and an uneasy calm mirrored the public mood as J&K and Ladakh transitioned to freshly minted Union territories administered by lieutenant governors.

While R K Mathur was



Murmu takes oath as the first LG of J&K in Srinagar on Thursday

sworn in as Ladakh's first LG at Leh, G C Murmu took the oath of office as LG of J&K in Srinagar later in the day.

In Leh, 48-year-old travel agency owner Lobzang Visuddav said Ladakh formally becoming a Union territory

was one of the happiest moments of his life. "Ladakh has waited for this for 70 years," he told TOI over the phone. Rigzin Kalon, a 36-year-old government employee, said the challenge would be to ensure that the change does not work against Ladakh.

"We are delighted with what has happened in the region, but our worry remains domicile rights. Outsiders should not be allowed to settle down in Leh."

Celebrations organised by BJP workers in Leh contrasted with stone-pelting on security forces by protesters in Srinagar and elsewhere in the Valley. Several organisations had called for the transition to be observed as a "black day".

Kargil resident Sajjad Kargili, 35, said he would nev-

er be able to accept the changes that came with the nullification of Articles 370 and 35A that took away J&K's special status. "We are not bothered about why Leh and not Kargil has been made the headquarters of Ladakh. We want the reunification of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh."

Srinagar resident Mohammad Yousuf Khan said the swearing-in of the two lieutenant governors was when the enormity of J&K's transformation sank in.

"Today, for the first time, I felt what all of us have known since August 5 — that Jammu & Kashmir has had its uniqueness taken away."

Former J&K governor SP Malik was present at neither swearing-in. Official sources said he had left for Delhi.

(With inputs from agencies)