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Cong didn't care...

sound good from their mouth. These tribals have taken care of Lord Ram. Did the tribal society not make Lord Ram, Purshottam Ram? We are the disciples and worshippers of tribals who made Lord Ram, the Purshottam Ram," Modi said.

For the first time in the country, a separate ministry for the welfare of tribals was constituted when the BJP came to power under the leadership of the then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he said.

"This is our culture. A ministry, department and budget have been allocated for the uplift of tribals," the PM said, noting the Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas (Tribal Pride Day) is celebrated on November 15 every year.

"The Congress cared for one family. Their state governments named roads and lanes after them. Even their manifesto has their names," he said.

Further targeting the Congress, Modi said a "tear clothes" competition is going on in Madhya Pradesh Congress.

This dig comes against the backdrop of a video of MP Congress president Kamal Nath wherein he asked Congress workers to "tear the clothes" of his colleague Digvijaya Singh over the denial of poll ticket to a leader.

Speaking at Khandwa, which falls under the politically crucial Malwa Nimar region, the prime minister said the Congress is desperate to form a government in MP and wanted to make the state its ATM for Lok Sabha elections.

"They want to loot the state's money and send it by tractors (to Delhi). I am confident that the BJP will form the government for the third time in 2024. To fulfil your dream a government (of BJP) in the state and the one at the Centre will work with double speed," he added.

He alleged Congress indulges in corruption and spoils the states where it forms governments. They indulge in infighting and have no time for the people," he said and gave examples of Karnataka and Rajasthan.

"This is the culture of Congress, where infighting continues. And their judge sitting in Delhi adjudicates and runs the shop," Modi added.

"In Rajasthan, after getting a clear majority two groups have been fighting for the last four and a half years for 24 hours," Modi said referring to the rivalry between state chief minister Ashok Gehlot and former deputy CM Sachin Pilot.

Modi said the Congress has damaged Karnataka where development has come to a standstill and raised doubts about the continuation of its chief minister at the helm.

"Look at the Congress government which was formed just six months ago in Karnataka...the CM does not know how long he is going to be the head of the state. They have spoiled Karnataka where the development activities have come to a standstill," he said.

He alleged that Congress always thought about the development of one family while remaining in power for a long time from panchayat to Parliament at the cost of the people.

"But after the BJP came to power at the Centre things have changed and schemes are being framed for the welfare of the public which resulted in schemes like free ration to the people during COVID-19," Modi said.

He alleged Congress's hunger for money grew manifold after remaining out of power for many years.

Referring to the mass availability of mobile phones in the country, Modi said mobile phones as well as data services are cheaper in the country because of his government's policies and ensuring huge savings for the people.

He also said the Janaushadhi Kendras set up by the government offered an 80 per cent discount on medicines.

Farmers in India are getting urea at Rs 300 per bag, which is 10 times less than what it costs cultivators in the US, he said.

He listed the BJP government's various other initiatives, including naming Habibganj railway station in Madhya Pradesh capital Bhopal after Rani Kamalapati.

The Malwa-Nimar region commands a substantial share of the state's political landscape including tribal votes along with the Mahakoshal region. In the 2018 polls, the Congress had outperformed the BJP in both the regions.

Education system must...

transform the lives of ordinary people, he added.

The Lt Governor also shared the unique initiatives taken by the UT Administration, under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide inclusive, equitable, high-quality education, besides skilling and up-skilling of the talented youth of Jammu Kashmir.

Members of Achala Education Foundation Trust; eminent personalities from all walks of life, teachers and scholars were present on the occasion.

Govt blocks Mahadev...

State Government while they have been investigating it for last 1.5 years. In fact, the first and only request has been received from ED and it has been acted upon. Nothing prevented Chhattisgarh Government from making similar requests," Chandrasekhar said.

Accused Bhim Singh Yadav, working as a constable in the Chhattisgarh police force, and one Asim Das are currently in custody, having been arrested for violating Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the statement said.

Fifth phase of...

services besides spreading awareness about various services and initiatives of the Government. They have also helped in identification of beneficiaries (especially youth and women) for availing skill development and self-employment schemes. In collaboration with banks, substantial number of unemployed youth has been provided self-employment opportunities.

Dr. Mehta stressed that this edition of B2V shall among others focus on saturation of self-employment schemes, progress on implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission, saturation of welfare schemes including old-aged pension scheme, sports, culture, progress on achievement of deliverables, availability of electricity in villages along with host of other parameters for which a booklet is being circulated to Prabhari Officers. The entire data will be collated digitally and will be analyzed for consequential action at the relevant levels of the Government.

It was informed that the Rural Development Department shall provide requisite training to Prabhari Officers who will be undertaking this programme for the first time. Besides, Deputy Commissioners shall do the phasing of B2V in their districts as per their operational requirements.

The Back to Village programme has come a long way and is now a component of Aspirational Panchayat Programme. The Panchayat Development Index is another innovation being implemented by J&K Government. The key objective of the Programme is saturation of services and bridging the gap between Government and people.

He appealed for overwhelming participation of public in the B2V programme, as

it serves as a true measure of the initiative's success. Further, all officers were strongly encouraged to actively participate in B2V activities to achieve the specific objectives set for this phase.

Man posing as...

Rs 40 lakh, the spokesman said, adding the stolen household items were recovered from the arrested accused's house.

A case has been registered at Kunzer police station and further investigation is on, police said while requesting the community members not to fall prey in the hands of such fraudulent people and share such information with Police.

"Our consistent action against anti-social elements shall assure community members that Police has resolved to act tough against such inimical elements", the spokesperson added.

Modi Govt's 'Divyaang'...

cadre preference besides home cadre for Divyangs qualifying civil services examination, increase in reservation for Divyangs from 3 percent to 4 percent, increase in the Divyang special allowance for parents etc. These measures were meant to ensure enough opportunities for Divyangs in government jobs, promoting inclusivity and diversity in the public sector.

Dr. Jitendra Singh emphasized that each of these steps reflects the government's dedication to fostering an inclusive and equitable society where Divyangs have equal opportunities and access to crucial government services.

The Minister lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a more accessible and inclusive India. Dr. Jitendra Singh said that the PM Narendra Modi government has distributed 10 crore LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) cylinders, marking a momentous achievement in the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY). He said the government's relentless dedication to the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has resulted in the construction of an astonishing 12 crore toilets across the country. This underscores the government's commitment to improving the quality of life for millions of Indians. Dr. Jitendra Singh also said that this government has taken a remarkable step by doubling the welfare support for Divyang individuals, increasing it from 27,000 to 54,000. This increase will provide them with greater financial stability and support in meeting their daily needs and requirements.

Later, Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated the Free Mobile Eye Clinic Ambulance. The Free Mobile Eye Clinic Ambulance represents a significant step forward in healthcare accessibility, offering comprehensive eye examinations, consultations, and treatment to individuals across the Reasi. This initiative aims to prevent, diagnose, and manage eye conditions, ultimately contributing to improved vision and a better quality of life for all.

The 'Divyaang Sashaktikaran Sammelan' was attended by National President Saksham Dayal Singh, President SAKSHAM J&K Abhay Pargal, District Development Council Chairman Saraf Singh Nag, District Development Commissioner Vishesh Mahajan, DIG Udampur- Reasi Suleman Choudhary and prominent citizens.

Apple imports not...

we want our produce to reach global markets, we should focus on improving the quality of our produce so that it can compete in the national and international markets," Director, Horticulture, Kashmir, Ghulam Rasool Mir told PTI.

"Compared to 2022, this year the production has recorded a shortfall and the main reason for this is erratic weather. First, decrease in the temperatures hit pollination followed by intermittent hailstorm and sudden rise in the temperature with less rainfall," he said.

Mir said the climatic variations are beyond human control but the horticulture department carried out awareness camps at regular intervals to educate the farmers about spraying of orchards in scientific ways and also issued regular weather advisories so that the damage is minimized.

"The department is also encouraging hi-tech machinery like grading and packaging machines by providing subsidies. The government has already launched a five-year holistic development of agriculture and allied sectors which also include an integrated project for horticulture, with one of its components being post harvesting subsidy to ensure that our produce is properly presented in the market," he said.

However, less production of apple this season in Kashmir has not disheartened the orchardists who are looking forward to improve quality of fruits to win over the local and international markets.

Syed Shakeeb Ayoub, a progressive apple grower from Shopian, claimed that he was the first to introduce a small grading and packaging unit in Shopian, the "apple bowl" of Kashmir.

"We need to look into various scientific ways to improve the quality of apples so that our produce is able to compete in the national and international markets," Ayoub told PTI at his unit.

Tanvir Ahmad, another apple grower from Shopian, said the unemployed youth should come forward and invest their time and energy in the apple industry.

"The government needs to do more to educate the farmers," he said, claiming that there is lack of awareness among the growers with regard to various schemes meant for their benefit.

Ahmad said there is over 40 per cent reduction in the apple crop this year but the rates are good. "The government should provide subsidies on anti-hail nets which will benefit us."

However, some apple growers in north Kashmir's Sopore are not happy as their crop was badly hit by scabies which they attributed to availability of spurious insecticides, a charge denied by the horticulture department.

Firdous Ahmad, an apple grower from Sopore, said crops of several farmers were hit by scabies this year, causing huge losses to them.

"The apple growers of Sopore, which has Asia's largest mandi and is known as 'Chhota London', has been facing the problem of scabies for the past couple of years. I invested over Rs 3.50 lakh on spraying of pesticide this year but the disease returned this time as well, causing huge loss to us," he said.

He blamed "spurious" pesticides in the market for the problem and said "we have lost trust" in the department.

On complaints about "spurious" pesticides by some farmers, horticulture director Mir said a tight vigil is being maintained by the department with active support of the agriculture department to ensure that the orchardists get good quality products only.

"The department is frequently checking and taking samples from the market," he said, blaming weather and non-adherence of the advisories by some growers for the apple scabies.

Mir also said the department is holding awareness camps for the farmers to introduce high density plantations. "The new scheme of the government is not only meant for apples but also for other fruits. A total of 12 fruits like cherry, kiwi, walnut, and almond in Kashmir, and guava, dragon fruit and citrus fruits in Jammu region are covered under the high density plantation scheme for which 50 per cent subsidy is available," he said.

Ghulam Hassan Bhat, an orchardist from Shopian, requested the government to

ensure Jammu-Srinagar national highway remains open to facilitate transport of apples from the orchards to the markets outside the valley.

"The closure of the highway due to landslides in the past has caused loss to the growers," he said.

Local body polls...

independent State Election Commission on time," Wani had said.

In a letter to the housing and urban development department last month, the CEO's office said consequent to the appointment of a full-time state election commissioner, the mandate to conduct the municipal electoral processes needs to be transferred from the CEO to the SEC.

"For this, the election authority under the municipal acts needs to be changed from chief electoral officer to the state election commissioner. The constitutional provisions also mandate this," the letter read.

The five-year term of most of the municipalities, including the Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) and the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), ends this month, while the term of panchayats is expiring on January 9 next year. The term of the SMC ended on November 5 and the JMC's ends on November 14.

The tenure of block development councils (BDCs) and district development councils (DDCs) is ending in October 2024 and January 2026, respectively.

The last ULB and panchayat elections were held between October and December 2018 after a long delay.

The CEO's office, in its letter, also referred to various petitioners who have objected to the large-scale difference in the electoral base of each seat of the two municipal corporations and demanded a fresh delimitation of all bodies.

"...there is a large difference in the elector bases of different wards wherein there are wards with elector bases in the range of 2,000 to 3,000 on one side and 12,000 to 15,000 on the other extreme. Similar variance is there in most of the municipal councils and committees also. This skew in the representation strength of each ward can be addressed by a fresh delimitation exercise," the letter said.

The officials said the rural development department is also considering the demand for rationalisation of electorates in panchayat segments.

The All Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Conference (AJKPC), a representative body of elected panches and sarpanches, has been demanding delimitation of 'halqa panchayats'.

"There are panchayats where the number of voters is just 600 while this number is anything between 3,000 and 4,000 in other panchayats. There is a need for rationalisation of these panchayats to have a level playing field for ensuring free, fair and transparent polls," AJKPC president Anil Sharma had said.

The CEO's office also referred to suggestions and objections which it had received consequent to the publication of updated electoral rolls and draft reservation of seats in all the municipal bodies for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women as per extant rules.

It said the demand for reservation of other backward classes in consonance with constitutional provisions was also highlighted.

Out of the 75 wards of the JMC, having 4,65,794 voters, 25 wards are reserved for women, 10 for scheduled castes and two for scheduled tribes. Similarly, in the 75 wards of the SMC, having 7,46,711 voters, 25 wards were reserved for women.

Quoting a Supreme court ruling on the subject forwarded by the petitioners in support of their demand, the CEO's office said that "if reservation has to be made in favour of OBCs then corresponding amendments in municipal acts and rules are required".

They said the elections to ULBs and panchayats is likely to be held next year after completion of the ongoing process.

With the Jammu and Kashmir administration tight-lipped on the holding of ULB and panchayat elections, political parties, including the Congress, the National Conference and the PDP, are targeting the BJP government at the Centre for the delay in holding elections to assembly and grass-root level institutions.

The assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir were last held in 2014.

Slow progress in...

buses will also be equipped with facilities like real time passenger information system, panic button, location system, CCTV cameras, stop request system, online ticket booking, payments through QR code and several security related features.

As per the contract signed between Tata Motors and Jammu Smart City Limited, the automobile company has to set up charging stations, bus depots, and deliver 100 electric buses each in Jammu and Srinagar by October end.

A fleet of 75 e-buses started operation in Srinagar on November 1 with just seven charging stations against a total of 20. Tata Motors has failed to establish a bus depot in Bhagwati Nagar in Jammu in the given time frame besides the charging stations, causing delay in the launch of electric buses in the city of temples, the sources said.

Inadequate number of charging stations is also likely to cause hindrance in the smooth functioning of the recently launched e-buses in Srinagar, they added.

When contacted, a Tata Motors spokesperson said: "Charging infrastructure in both Srinagar and Jammu is being consistently developed and is now in ready to operate mode. Accordingly, e-bus operations formally commenced in Srinagar from 1 Nov and will commence in Jammu within the next few days."

According to the official sources, the complete delivery of electric buses has not been received so far, though sufficient number of electric buses have arrived in both the cities. However, the infrastructure is not ready to start seamless operations in Jammu.

Around 20 per cent work of the bus depot has been completed so far in Jammu, while the work is still in progress for charging stations at Kathua, Udampur and Katra, the sources said.

As per the contract, Tata Motors will be responsible for supply, operation and maintenance of 100 electric buses each (25 buses having length of 12 metres and 75 vehicles with length of 9 metres) with an assured operation of 200 kilometres per day per bus.

Transportation technology company Chalo Mobility will provide consumer technology solutions such as electronic ticket issuing machines (ETIMs), an automated fare collection system (AFCS), a mobile app with mobile tickets and mobile passes platform, smart cards platform, and cloud-based hosting.

Earlier on Thursday, Tata Motors had said it will supply and operate 200 electric buses in Srinagar and Jammu for 12 years for Jammu and Srinagar Smart City projects.

The company has supplied the first batch of Ultra EV air-conditioned electric buses to Srinagar Smart City Ltd via TML Smart City Mobility Solutions (J&K) Pvt Ltd, a group company, Tata Motors had said in a statement.

"The delivery of the electric buses is a part of its larger order to supply, maintain and operate 100 electric buses in Srinagar and 100 electric buses in Jammu, for a period 12-years for Jammu and Srinagar Smart City projects," it had said.

Jaishankar speaks to Iranian counterpart, discusses 'grave' situation

STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday spoke to his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and discussed the "grave" situation arising out of the Israel-Hamas conflict.

In the phone conversation, Jaishankar conveyed to Amir-Abdollahian the importance of preventing escalation of the conflict and the need for providing humanitarian support to people in Gaza. "Spoke today with Iranian Foreign Minister @AmirAbdollahian. Discussed the grave situation in West Asia and the concern of the international community," the external affairs minister posted on X.



of preventing escalation and providing humanitarian support. Agreed to stay in touch," he said. On Saturday, Jaishankar had a phone conversation with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen. Israel has been carrying out a massive military offensive in Gaza following the unprecedented and multi-pronged attacks on Israeli cities by Hamas militants on October 7. Hamas killed around 1,400 people in Israel and kidnapped more than 220 others. According to authorities in Gaza, more than 9,000 people have been killed in Israeli counter-attack.

Previously, Jaishankar had discussed the situation in West Asia with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, his counterpart from the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and with Oman's Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi.

NC organises bike rally to create awareness against drug addiction

STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: The National Conference (NC) organised a bike rally here on Sunday to create awareness about the ill effects of drug addiction.

NC leader Tanvir Sadiq led the rally from Shahar-e-Khas to Qaid Mazar in Hazratbal, Naseem Bagh, a party spokesperson said.

As part of the NC's ambitious War Against Drug Addiction (WADA) campaign, a bike rally was organised in Zadibal constituency. The aim of the rally was to create awareness among the common people about the harmful effects of psychotropic drugs and drug addiction, he said.

Sadiq said the bike rally was not a stand-alone effort but part of a series of efforts by the NC to address the growing menace of drug

addiction and its prevalence among the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

The party had constituted a committee which, after exhaustive discussions with experts in the fields of medicine and community health, submitted a report on the pressing issue.

Sadiq, who is also the NC's chief spokesperson, expressed gratitude to the civil and police administration for making the event successful.

He said the small effort will go a long way in contributing significantly to the success of the party's efforts aimed at curbing the drug menace.

"It is imperative that we unite and take a stand against this growing threat that has now reached our doorsteps. It is time for us to awaken to reality," Sadiq said.

Development can never be achieved through violence: Prez to youths from Maoist-affected areas

STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday told a group of youngsters from Maoist-affected areas of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh that development can never be achieved through violence and urged them to understand the importance of education.

She said that the country's democratic system provides equal opportunities to everyone.

They just have to make their way with hardwork and dedication, a statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan quoted the president as having said.

She said that their future is bright and stressed that "development can never be achieved through vio-

lence".

Murmu advised them to have full faith in the country's Constitution and democracy.

A youth delegation from Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh had called on the president at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here.

They are in Delhi under the Tribal Youth Exchange Programme being organised by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs for youths of areas most-affected by Left Wing Extremism, the statement said.

The president said that education is the foundation of individual and community development.

She urged them to understand the importance of education as well as make others aware about it.

Murmu advised them to get inspiration from "our ancestors and strengthen India by imbining their values and ideals".

The government is striving for the all-round development of the country and all citizens, she said and added that it is committed to provide equal opportunities to everyone without any discrimination.

"Even in the remotest areas, the government is building amenities like roads, communication, education and health facilities for development of all. Many ITIs and skill development centres have been established to enhance the vocational skills of the youth and provide them employment opportunities," Murmu said.