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intellectual heritage is truly inspiring," the Lieutenant Governor said. He said the way GCC has designed its entire programs clearly reflects the youth's desire to adopt a futuristic approach.

To realize the progress that we have envisaged for J&K, we need to secure the health and well-being of our youth at local level. GCC is working with administration to achieve this goal through infrastructure and coaching, he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also spoke on the steps taken by the government under the guidance of Prime Minister, empowering the youth to lead the development journey of Jammu Kashmir and the nation.

"Future-oriented and progressive policies in sectors like education, industries, skill development, sports, agriculture, infrastructure, innovation, entrepreneurship, and transparent and merit-based recruitments have kindled brighter hope for our talented youth," the Lieutenant Governor further added.

He also appreciated the endeavours of Guidance & Career Counselling Cell for Youth Development aimed at women empowerment and initiatives like mass campaign against drug abuse, competitive exams preparations, leadership-personality development, interview preparations, and sports related activities.

The Lieutenant Governor also paid homage to the Army Bravehearts, Freedom Fighters and other great personalities of Gurha Slathia and recalled their contribution to the nation.

Surjit Singh Slathia, Member of Legislative Assembly, Samba; Rajesh Sharma, Deputy Commissioner, Samba; Sudarshan Singh Slathia DDC Member; senior officials; members of Guidance and Counselling Cell for Youth Development (GCC) and youth in large number were present.

Padma Shri Mohan Singh Slathia; Lieutenant General (Retd.) Anoop Singh Jamwal and various prominent personalities from diverse fields were also present.

Highlights...

enabling them to pursue their dreams. The focused effort to study, understand, develop and conserve cultural and intellectual heritage is truly inspiring.

Omar holds pre...

representatives voiced concerns regarding drainage and sewerage management, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas, calling for modernized drainage network to prevent waterlogging and sanitation issues.

The alarming rise in drug abuse was another key issue, with requests for establishing de-addiction centers, awareness campaigns and stricter enforcement measures. Several members also called for the development of sports infrastructure, including the construction of stadiums, playgrounds, and training centers to encourage youth participation in sports.

Tourism development was another key focus, with suggestions to promote local attractions, improve tourist amenities, and create new tourism circuits to boost the local economy.

The public representatives thanked Chief Minister Omar Abdullah for initiating the pre-budget consultations, stating that it was for the first time that they were being actively involved in the budget formulation process.

They expressed appreciation for the government's inclusive approach, which allowed them to voice their constituency needs directly. They also expressed optimism that their concerns and demands would be taken into account while drafting the budget.

Earlier, Deputy Commissioner Jammu presented a detailed sector-wise proposal based on inputs from MLAs. The proposals covered various development sectors, including rural and urban development, public works, irrigation, healthcare, education, and social welfare.

Special attention was given to flood protection measures, groundwater conservation, and strengthening the Jal Shakti department to address water scarcity.

New Delhi railway...

others received simple injuries, the Railway ministry said in a statement, adding that out of them 11 were given treatment and released from a hospital.

As survivors recalled how people trampled over each other amid cries for help, the Delhi Police said it will analyse the CCTV footage to determine the exact sequence of events before chaos erupted at the station on Saturday night. The station witnessed a surge of passengers waiting to board trains at platform number 14 and 15 for Prayagraj—where the Maha Kumbh is underway.

A preliminary probe revealed that the the stampede occurred after some passengers slipped and fell on others while coming down from a foot overbridge.

The Railway ministry ordered a high level inquiry by a two-member committee into the stampede which also triggered a political blame game. The Opposition demanded Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw's resignation for alleged mismanagement and accusing the government of trying to cover up the incident.

"The committee comprises Shri Pankaj Gangwar, Principal Chief Security Commissioner, and Shri Nar Singh, Principal Chief Commercial Manager, Northern Railway, both Higher Administrative Grade officers," the ministry said.

The stampede occurred at 9.55 pm when thousands of passengers, mostly Maha Kumbh pilgrims, crowded the station to board trains to Prayagraj.

"There is an unprecedented rush due to Maha Kumbh. Many special trains have been operating for the past several days. Prayagraj Express was about to arrive at platform number 14 and passengers were waiting to board the train," Dilip Kumar, Executive Director, Information and Publicity, Railway Board, said in a statement.

"There was some time left for the Prayagraj Express to come to the platform. Meanwhile, an announcement was made for another train Prayagraj Special to arrive at platform number 12. Before this one, one more special train had already left that platform," Kumar added.

Passengers of platform number 14, thinking that their train would come at 12, started moving towards the escalator and stairs which led to stampede, Kumar said. 18 passengers lost their lives, he said. President Droupadi Murmu and political leaders across the spectrum condoled the loss of lives in the stampede.

"My thoughts are with all those who have lost their loved ones. I pray that the injured have a speedy recovery. The authorities are assisting all those who have been affected by this stampede," he said on X

Northern Railway's Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Himanshu Upadhyay said that at the time of incident the Patna-bound Magadh Express was positioned at platform number 14 and the New Delhi-Jammu Uttar Sampark Kranti Express was stationed at platform number 15.

The Delhi Police put out a list of the 18 victims. The dead have been identified as Asha Devi (79), Pinky Devi (41), Sheela Devi (50), Vyom (25), Poonam Devi (40), Lalita Devi (35), Suruchi (11), Krishna Devi (40), Vijay Sah (15), Neeraj (12), Shanti Devi (40), Pooja Kumari (8), Sangeeta Malik (34), Poonam (34), Mamta Jha (40), Riya Singh (7), Baby Kumari (24) and Manoj (47).

Five of the 18 victims died due to traumatic asphyxia, the RML Hospital said.

"No injured were brought to RML Hospital. We received five dead bodies from LNJP for postmortem. Four of them were females and one a male," a senior doctor said. The Delhi Police found in its initial probe that the stampede happened as passengers got confused between 'Prayagraj Express' and 'Prayagraj Special', and thought they might miss their train, police sources said.

A narrow stairway with 42 steps leading to a 25-foot-wide foot overbridge at the station turned into a scene of panic and chaos amid unprecedented rush.

Scattered slippers, torn bags, and abandoned belongings lay strewn across the staircase, the bridge, and platforms 14 and 15.

Porters recounted their harrowing experience of carrying bodies on handcarts.

"We carried dead bodies on handcarts, the same ones we use for luggage. In my 15 years as a porter, I have never seen such a massive crowd," said Balram, a porter.

"A massive crowd gathered on the (foot overbridge)bridge. People were so cramped for space that many suffocated. Around 10-15 people lost their lives right there," another porter Krishna Kumar Jogi said, adding that the crowd quickly swelled when a train bound for Prayagraj arrived.

Opal Singh, who lost his seven-year-old daughter in the stampede, said, "When she was born, I held her against my chest. Today, I carried her lifeless body away."

Singh and his family planned a tour of Maha Kumbh. But as they reached the station to take the train for Prayagraj, they saw a huge crowd.

Singh told PTI that as they made their way toward platform number 14, chaos suddenly erupted with a massive surge of people coming back up the staircase, triggering the stampede.

A compensation of Rs 10 lakh each has been announced by the Ministry of Railways for the next of kin of those killed in the stampede. Those seriously injured will get Rs 2.5 lakh and those with minor injuries 1 lakh, it said.

The distraught family members of those missing since the stampede frantically searched for their loved ones, running from one hospital to another, carrying their photos and not knowing what to do.

Amit Shah's security...

become a reference point for the renaissance of Viksit Bharat.

In the past five years, the country viewed and acted in Jammu and Kashmir in a manner never seen before. On the physical and psychological plane, Jammu and

Kashmir was seen as a three-region entity, having their own aspirations but drifting in different directions. A sort of identity crisis had arisen. Ladakh wanted to be a UT, and the governments were risk-averse as they feared some of the imagined consequences, which they believed could set off fissiparous tendencies. This fear was projected by the politicians, who thought that giving UT status to Ladakh would mean undermining their influence and their capacity to bargain. Separatists played it up in terms of the large area involved in conflict .But the Modi government took this decision and reduced the perceived area of conflict.

Today, Jammu and Kashmir is a success story that the country has weaved in its narration. The central theme is that normalcy, the stepping stone of the UT's journey to peace. That would open doors for the development, which had been missing in K&K ever since independence. The Centre accepted its accession in 1947 and also sent army to rescue it from Pakistani invaders, but Kashmir was always thought as a place where the conflict was seen as a companion. All things changed on August 5, 2019, in terms of the constitution making it a really integrated part of the country with no ifs and busts. But the real meaning to the constitutional changes was given by invoking sense of oneness among the people.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister have dedicated themselves with absolute devoting to make Jammu and Kashmir great again.

There, however, is a consistent campaign front across the border, Pakistan, to reignite disturbances. It is pushing in terrorists and terror- related material to keep the things disturbed. Unfortunately, there are some of the disturbing things happening in Kashmir as well. The anti-India elements are busy in spreading disaffection and distributing material on social media and print literature to hamper the positive trajectory.

The review meetings have taken all this into account. Newer strategies have been worked out to neutralize the men and women behind such anti-national activities and narratives. This was needed and that's what the Home Minister and the LG have done.

BJP legislature party...

post include Parvesh Verma, who defeated AAP supremo and former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in the election from the New Delhi seat, and former Delhi BJP presidents Vijender Gupta and Satish Upadhyay.

Pawan Sharma, Ashish Sood, Rekha Gupta and Shikha Rai, among others, are also contenders for the chief minister's post.

Many in the party believe that as was the cases in Rajasthan, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Chhattisgarh, the BJP leadership might put its bets on a "dark horse" among the newly-elected MLAs.

Maha Kumbh, number...

1.36 crore devotees taking a holy dip, while on Friday, around one crore pilgrims participated in the ritual, pushing the total number of pilgrims past the 50-crore mark.

Bhagwat emphasises unity...

the world's diversity. This nature accepts and moves forward with the world's diversities. There is one eternal truth that never changes," he added.

He underscored that the foundation of Hindu society rests on its ability to embrace diversity, a principle encapsulated in the Sanskrit phrase 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family).

"We say 'unity in diversity,' but Hindu society understands that diversity itself is unity," the RSS chief added.

Bhagwat said in India, no one remembers the emperors and maharajas, but instead remembers a king who went into exile for 14 years to fulfil his father's promise - an apparent reference to Lord Ram, and the person who placed his brother's sandals on the throne, and who handed over the kingdom upon his return.

"These characteristics define India. Those who follow these values are Hindus and they keep the diversity of the entire country united," he explained.

Reiterating the need for Hindu unity, Bhagwat said even in good times, challenges will arise.

"The nature of the problem is irrelevant; what matters is how prepared we are to face them," he added.

The rally was held after the Calcutta High Court approved it after the Bengal police initially refused permission.

Speaking on historical invasions dating back to Alexander, Bhagwat noted that "a handful of barbarians, who were not superior in virtue, ruled over India, "attributing it to internal betrayal within society".

The RSS chief emphasised that societal participation is necessary to change the destiny of a nation.

He emphasised that India was not created by the British and argued that the notion of India being disunited was instilled in people by them.

He remarked, "Even Mahatma Gandhi had once said that it was the British who tried to teach us that they created India, and he had said that this was wrong. India has existed for centuries - diverse, yet united. All those who live in this country believe in this idea of unity in diversity. Today, if we talk about this, we are accused of talking about Hindutva."

As the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) marks a century since its inception in 1925, Bhagwat addressed a gathering, reflecting on the organisation's journey and purpose.

"Sangh is a big organisation spread across the country with about 70,000 shakhas," Bhagwat said, acknowledging the sheer scale of the RSS.

"We are called the biggest organisation in the world. But why do we want to grow? Not for our own sake. Even if our name is not there, it does not matter, but if society is united, it will help the country and the world."

He reiterated that the core mission of the RSS is to bring people together.

"The only task for the RSS is to unite society," he said, urging people to engage with the organisation firsthand.

"My appeal is to understand Sangh, come within its fold. There is no fee for this. No membership is required. You can come here at your will and leave if you do not like," he assured.

Bhagwat acknowledged that understanding the RSS takes time, as its only goal is uniting the entire 'Hindu samaj' (Hindu society) to develop 'atmiyata', a close emotional bond.

He encouraged individuals to interact with the organisation directly rather than forming opinions from a distance.

"Mistakes and misunderstandings develop when people try to understand the organisation from a distance. Come in close contact with the Sangh, see it for yourself," he said.

Jammu is not...

of Jammu and prosperity of its people," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also spoke on the key initiatives of the government including beautification of Mubarak Mandi to Raghunath Bazaar Heritage Trail, development of Spiritual Tourism Circuit, and augmentation of facilities at tourist and religious places in the region.

He further called upon every section of the society to identify and isolate the divisive elements who are posing threat to peace and harmony.

In view of the heavy rush of the people at Raghunath Bazar, the Lieutenant Governor suggested for exploring the possibility for organizing Shri Raghunath Ji ki Jammu Aarti at the banks of the Tawi river and make it a daily event. He further asked the Municipal Commissioner Jammu to reserve a spot in Tawi River front and Tawi Barrage Project for the people for regularly organizing Aarti programmes.

Rajesh Gupta, Chairman Shri Raghunathji Corridor Vikas Council; Baldev Khullar, former President, Shri Raghunath Bazaar Businessmen Association; Rajesh Diwan, President, Hari Market Association; Jatinder Gupta, President Ranbir Market Association; Pankaj Mahajan, President, Vivekanand Marg Traders Association; senior officials; heads of various religious and business associations, members of civil society groups, Acharyas and Archakas were present.

Brief exchange of...

The ceasefire violation along the borders in J&K have become few and far between since India and Pakistan renewed the ceasefire agreement on February 25, 2021.

Two bodies found in Kathua

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Two people were found dead in a remote village in Kathua district on Sunday, a police officer said.

Bodies of Roshan Lal, 45, and Shamsher, 37, were retrieved from the banks of a stream at village Batheri, station house officer of Billawar police station Jitender Singh told PTI.

He said preliminary information revealed that the deceased had been strangulated by unknown persons.

The exact cause of the death will be known only after the postmortem, the officer said, adding police have started investigations after registering a murder case. Official sources said a terror angle cannot be ruled out yet.

Last year, several parts of Kathua, including Billawar, witnessed terror activities including an attack on an army patrol that left five soldiers dead.

Bukhari expresses grief over passing of Syed Abdul Bari

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Apni Party President Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari has expressed his profound grief over the death of Syed Abdul Bari, a retired Assistant Commissioner of Revenue Department and resident of Hill View Colony, Wanabal, Rawalpura, Srinagar, who passed away a day before yesterday.

In his condolence message, Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari termed Bari's passing a personal loss, stating that he feels bereaved by his demise.

He said, "The passing of Syed Abdul Bari is a personal loss to me, as my family and I have shared a cherished bond with Bari Sahib and his family for decades."

He added, "In fact, my late father, Syed Mohammad Iqbal Bukhari, was born in Syed Abdul Bari Sahib's house when their family lived in Leh, and since then, our families have maintained a deep and enduring connection."

Expressing his profound grief, Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari said, "I feel bereaved by his passing. His departure leaves a void that words cannot fill. In this moment of grief and sorrow, I extend my heartfelt condolences to his family, especially his sons Syed Saidain and Syed Iftikhar, and nephew Syed Afadul Mujtaba. I pray to Almighty Allah to grant Syed Abdul Bari the highest place in Jannah and to bless his family with the strength and patience to bear this immense loss."

Army conducts lecture on Career Counselling at Manjakot

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

RAJOURI: In its continued efforts to guide and inspire young minds, the Indian Army organized a Career Counselling Session at Govt Senior Secondary School, Manjakot, for students aspiring to shape their future after Class 12th.

The interactive session aimed to educate students about various career options available to them, including opportunities in the Armed Forces, Civil Services, Engineering, Medicine, and other professional fields.

During the session, students were provided with valuable insights into different career paths, eligibility criteria, required qualifications, and preparation strategies for competitive exams.

Special emphasis was placed on opportunities in the Indian Armed Forces, including recruitment through the NCC, National Defence Academy (NDA), Technical Entry Scheme (TES), and the Agniveer Scheme, among others. Additionally, guidance was provided on higher education options, skill development programs, and government initiatives to support students in their career aspirations.

The students actively participated in the discussion, asking questions and seeking advice on various career-related aspects.

The session concluded with motivational words, encouraging students to work hard, stay determined, and make informed career choices. The lecture was attended by 105 students from all streams.

All staff members, the principal of the school, and the sarpanch of the village appreciated the efforts made by the Indian Army to guide and motivate the youth in achieving their dreams.

Rijiju's remarks reflect Centre's plan to not grant statehood to J&K soon: Congress

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Congress president Tariq Hameed Karra on Sunday said the statement of Union Minister Kiran Rijiju declining a timeline for the restoration of statehood to the Union Territory reflects the Centre's intention to not fulfil its promise to the people in near future.

Talking to reporters in Srinagar on Saturday, Rijiju said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have made it clear that statehood to Jammu and Kashmir will be restored in due course of time.

However, Rijiju, who holds the parliamentary affairs and minority affairs portfolios, declined to give a timeline for the restoration of statehood to the Union Territory.

"Rijiju's remarks are a clear message from the Modi government that it is not ready to grant statehood to Jammu and Kashmir in near future," Karra said, addressing a workers' convention at Doongi in Rajouri district as part of the party's 15-day campaign to press for restoration of statehood.

Criticising the BJP-led central government for the failure to keep its promise on early restoration of statehood, he said the Centre made a commitment to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the floor of parliament, before the Supreme Court and in numerous public rallies.

He called upon people to be ready for a struggle to get back their "dignity, status and rights" as a state.

Karra accused the BJP government of neglecting the border belt of Rajouri and Poonch districts during the last 10 years of its rule in the field of connectivity, health and education infrastructure.

"The railway project initiated by Rahul Gandhi after his visit to Rajouri in 2012 has been abandoned by the BJP-led government despite a survey proposing the project cost of Rs 13608 crore on the new line," he said, adding several hundred schools were closed and merged in the region.

PM hopeful of achieving Rs 9 lakh-cr textile exports ahead of 2030 deadline

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said he is optimistic that the textile sector will achieve the Rs 9 lakh crore annual exports target ahead of the 2030 deadline.

This assumes significance in view of the General Budget 2025 announcement of a five-year Cotton Mission to increase cotton productivity especially of extra-long staple varieties.

It allocated Rs 500 crore for the National Cotton Technology Mission.

Speaking at the Bharat Tex 2025, Modi said, "We are currently ranked as the 6th largest exporter of textiles and apparel in the world, with textile exports valued at approximately Rs 3 lakh crore. Our goal moving forward is to triple this figure and achieve exports worth Rs 9 lakh crore."

"This success is attributed to the hard work and consistent policies implemented over the past decade, which have led to a doubling of foreign investment in the textile sector during this period."

He said, "The way work is being done, I think we will achieve this target ahead of the 2030 deadline."

This success is attributed to the hard work and consistent policies implemented over the past decade, which have led to doubling of foreign investment in the textile sector during this period, he said.

The sector is a major employment generator and contributes 11 per cent to the manufacturing sector.

The Union Budget provided for an outlay of Rs 5,272 crore (in Budget Estimates) for the Ministry of Textiles for 2025-26. This is an increase of 19 per cent over Budget Estimates of Rs 4,417.03 crore for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Bharat Tex, being held in New Delhi from February 14-17, is the textile industry's largest event comprising a mega expo spread across two venues and showcasing the entire textile ecosystem.

The Bharat Tex is becoming a big global event, with more than 120 nations participating in it, Modi said.

India is moving ahead in the direction of manufacturing high-grade carbon fibre, he said.

The prime minister also urged the banking sector to provide assistance to textile sector as one unit needs investment of just Rs 75 crore, and gives employment to 2,000 people.

He noted that India's textiles and apparel exports registered 7 per cent growth last year.

The country is working on creating a skilled talent pool for the textile sector, he noted.

"Our focus is on technical textile sector; India making its presence felt in this space," he said.

The Prime Minister outlined his 5F vision for the textile sector encompassing -- farm to fibre; fibre to factory; factory to fashion; fashion to foreign. This vision is creating new opportunities for farmers, weavers, designers, and traders, he said.

Modi also called upon the textiles industry to collaborate with reputed institutes like IITs to develop new tools.