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J&K at a...

Modi became the prime minister; a new era of friendship started between India and the UAE.

I think, it is for the first time that India's head of state has twice or thrice visited the UAE and created a new environment of cooperation, Sinha said.

The J-K LG said during the Dubai Expo in January, the J-K administration interacted with many businessmen and invited them to visit J-K so that they could see with their own eyes and explore the investments here.

We interacted today and specified several issues and areas. We have identified their concerns and we have assured them that their redressal will be done in a minimum time period especially in the hospital and medical education, real estate, hospitality, food processing cold storages and cold chains, and education, he said.

Sinha said the delegates were very important people as many of them were CEOs of big companies.

The discussions have been very good. We will now try to take it to the conclusion very soon, he added.

He said the administration has taken steps which have started to show results.

I think it will result in increase in the business and employment generation. The industries and commerce department has made several efforts to take J-K's horticulture produce, handicrafts and crafts across the world. I am sure we will get huge success in this sector as well. The UT is at a transformative stage where prosperity will come, employment opportunities will come, and people will live in a peaceful coexistence, Sinha said.

Talking about the fast-paced socio-economic transformations taking place in J&K, the Lt Governor, while addressing the conference, said that the government embarked on several major initiatives in developing physical and social infrastructure and some of these initiatives are the biggest ever since the country's independence in 1947.

The development of the power sector; trade, horticulture, rural infrastructure, roads and air links, medical education and health services, Industrial Training Institutes, Information Technology and storage facilities for the produce are the diverse areas that have been addressed, the Lt Governor added.

The Lt Governor said that the sector-specific Industrial Estates and Industrial Parks are being promoted in a focused manner; besides launching a Single Window Portal as the one-stop solution for attaining all the approvals and permissions in a time bound manner.

'So far about 130 services are active on our single-window portal. We have also coordinated with various departments towards minimizing regulatory compliance burden over the businesses by eradicating redundant compliances, streamlining the processes for ease of doing business in the UT', he added.

Later, talking to Twitter, Sinha said during his address at the summit, he highlighted the scope for J-K and GCC companies' economic cooperation to make the "paradise on earth" as the most beautiful investment destination in the world.

The visit of CEOs of top companies, entrepreneurs, start-up representatives, exporters in J&K is an expression of confidence of the industry leaders in the potential for business cooperation between J&K and Gulf countries, he said in a series of tweets.

The LG said India's relationship with Gulf countries is being translated into a vibrant, revitalized economic partnership with J-K that will not only diversify our export basket but will also create a conducive environment for expansion of the existing trade.

We have worked with a coherent framework in last 2yrs to harness immense natural resources, economic potential of J&K. Under guidance of PM Narendra Modi and HM Amit Shah, we've also worked out a blueprint to unlock investment flows from compliance & restrictions, he said.

We promise to provide global standard end-to-end facilities for the businesses, skilled workforce, transparent and hassle-free regulatory mechanism and creation of necessary infrastructure wherever required, Sinha said.

He said since the Dubai Expo visit, many foreign companies from UAE have announced long-term plans for J-K. We are ready to take relationship to a qualitatively new level and strengthen our economic partnership .

The CEO of Century Financial, Bal Krishen, a native of Jammu's Doda region, who headed the delegation of businessmen said that the delegation has visited J&K with a clear mindset for investments.

He termed the visit of business delegates from the Gulf a huge step towards growth and development of UT, and said that it will lay a strong foundation for a better and prosperous future where dreams and aspirations transform into reality.

He called for a joint effort between government and businessmen to create opportunities for the welfare of people in J&K and lauded the UT Government for providing the people with the right opportunities and Ease of Doing Business. He also urged the delegates to seriously consider the local talent from J&K.

Ranjan Prakash Thakur, Principal Secretary to Government, Industries & Commerce Department spoke about the growing conducive atmosphere for investments in J&K. To instill confidence in the investors, we have addressed most of the concerns with respect to investment policy, he added.

Managing Director, Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organization (JKTPO), Ankita Kar gave a detailed presentation on Investment opportunities in Jammu and Kashmir highlighting the investment plans, focus sectors, policy support and ease of doing business.

Meanwhile, BST Organics Pvt Ltd, Pashmkaar, Sarveshwar Group, Sky Robo Drones Pvt Ltd, ESPA Learn Pvt Ltd, Fastbeetle, Orchardly, JKTDC, Reem Automotives, Peaks Group of Companies, other entrepreneurs and startups showcased their products, and pitched their ideas to the investors for investment and answered their queries during the interactive session.

Women entrepreneurs, who are being provided assistance in the form of capacity building, access to credit, and market linkages under the "Hausla- inspiring her growth" programme also pitched their models for further investment. These included- Ecokash, Masha and SEED solutions.

The Investment Summit was attended by CEOs of top UAE and Hong Kong Companies; Women Entrepreneurs, Start-up representatives and Exporters.

Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to Lt Governor, Pandurang K. Pole, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Sarmad Hafeez, Secretary to the Government, Tourism department, besides senior Government Officials were also present on the occasion.

'Huge potential for...

including real estate, hospitality, agriculture, said.

Asked if the delegation was sure of making investment in Kashmir, he said, Let me tell you very seriously, we are not here to waste the time. We came here for something. We took a step, there is a step we are taking now and there is a step which we are going to take in the future very soon."

The visiting businessman noted that the investments in J-K would be beneficial for both the countries -- the UAE and India -- and especially for Jammu and Kashmir.

To a query if the group was of the opinion that there was potential for investment in J-K, Alshaibani said yes, it is. It is 100 per cent .

Another member of the delegation, and the CEO of the Century Financial Group, Bal Krishen, said the delegation has come to J-K with a clear mind.

"They (the members of the delegation) see opportunities in J-K. A businessman sees only profits and they see opportunities and profits here. For this, they have come here with a pure and clear cut mind to invest here and create jobs," he said.

Police constable martyred...

martyr; a wreath laying ceremony led by DGP Dilbag Singh was held at DPL Srinagar; where floral tributes were paid to the martyr. Special DGP CID RR Swain, IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar, IG (Ops) CRPF MS Bhatia, DIG CKR Sujet Kumar-IPS, SSP Srinagar, SSP PCR Kashmir; besides, other officers and officials and family members of the martyr also laid floral wreaths on the mortal remains and paid rich tributes to the martyr for his supreme sacrifice made in the line of duty.

"My heart goes out to his family and loved ones. The cycle of violence is despicable and serves no cause. It only leaves behind inevitable loss and adds to our sufferings" Altaf Bukhari, President Apni Party; also wrote on Twitter while expressing heartfelt condolences on martyrdom of a policeman Imran Ahmad.

In a statement to the press, Bukhari said the conflict has claimed so many lives till date all across the region and this cycle of violence needs to stop.

"I unequivocally condemn this attack while at the same time sending my heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased.I urge the government to take precautionary measures to save innocent lives on duty. I hope that the perpetrators of the crime are punished at the earliest," he said.

Meanwhile, three people were arrested in connection with a grenade throwing incident in Shopian district, police said.

Police based on reliable sources picked up one suspect, identified as Fazil-bin-Rashid, a resident of Melhura in Shopian, in connection with the incident, a police spokesman said.

During questioning, Rashid disclosed that he was working with one active terrorist namely Basit Ahmed of Faisal Kulgam who was linked with proscribed terror outfit LeT (TRF). On his instructions, he threw a grenade at Babapora camp of CRPF on March 19 in which one CRPF Jawan was injured, he said.

The spokesman said Rashid disclosed that he lobbed the grenade as a task given by Ahmed in order to join terrorist ranks.

During further questioning, he disclosed the name of another accused person, identified as Qaiser Zahoore Khan, Nowpora Safakadal, Srinagar. On Khan's disclosure, incriminating material, arms and ammunition including three Chinese pistols, six magazines, four grenades and 30 rounds were recovered, he said.

All the three accused persons involved in the terror crime have been arrested and further investigation is on, the spokesman added.

Targeted killings in...

across the border), will not be allowed."

The DGP was talking to reporters after handing over keys of motorcycles and scooters to policemen and policewomen for undertaking patrolling along the borderline in Jammu, Samba and Kathua district, besides in the city.

Singh also flagged off border patrol and women helpline vehicles.

"Through CSR initiative, Hero MotoCorp has provided bikes that will be used for border patrolling and for women's squads in the cities," he said.

Karan Singh's son...

last Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh further said, "It is my belief the INC is unable to realise and reflect the sentiments and aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir."

Vikramaditya Singh had joined the PDP in August 2015 and was a member of the state Legislative Council. He resigned from the party in October, 2017, saying it wasn't possible for him to continue with the PDP which "disregarded the demands and aspirations of Jammu region".

Significant number of...

another question on launch pads and infrastructure built across the border; Pramaik said the government regularly reviews the security situation along the LoC and takes precautionary measures for thwarting any move by threat elements including the terrorists.

"However, information sought being a sensitive operational matter concerning national security, cannot be divulged in the interest of national security," he added.

Replying to a question about use of drones for delivery of ammunition by terrorists along the international border; Pramanik said the border guarding forces are well equipped to neutralise threats emanating from misuse of drones by rogue elements including terrorists.

"An incident of use of drone to deliver ammunition was noticed and the drone was neutralized in Punjab along Indo-Pakistan border in 2022," he said and added that anti-drone systems have been deployed along the border to tackle such situations.

In addition, border guarding forces have taken various preventive as well as precautionary measures to counter drones which include framing of standard operating procedures for countering drone, adequate deployment of troops and patrolling, and deployment of surveillance equipment.

COVID regulation for...

from October 18, 2021, and has now decided to recommence scheduled international flight operations from March 27, 2022, "in view of the declining COVID-19 cases, high level of vaccinations and prevailing COVID-19 situation".

The requirement of complete PPE kit for crew member stands removed, the MoCA stated.

"However, use of face mask and maintenance of hand hygiene/sanitiser continue to be mandatory," it added.

The pat-down search by security personnel at airports is reintroduced, wherever needed, as per directions of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security, the MoCA noted.

"During the process, the security personnel must wear N-95 mask and sanitise hands after each pat-down search, besides following regular COVID-19 protocols," it mentioned.

India reported a single-day rise of 1,581 fresh COVID-19 cases, taking the infection tally to 4,30,10,971, while the active cases further declined to 23,913, the Union Health Ministry said on Tuesday.

The death toll has climbed to 5,16,543, with 33 daily fatalities, the ministry data updated at 8 am stated.

Farooq Abdullah terms...

terrorists but unfortunately, there were no takers in the government in Delhi. Everyone knows whose government was at the Centre who had extended the outside support," Abdullah, who is the Lok Sabha member from Srinagar parliamentary constituency, said.

The former chief minister alleged the movie is "pure propaganda" and was being deliberately hyped by people with vested interests to polarise the nation. "The movie is far away from reality and it is only to polarise the nation and let me tell the nation today that it is not a healthy development," he said.

Abdullah said his son Omar Abdullah, who has also been the chief minister of the erst-while state, had been advocating the setting up of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission from the day he took over the office.

"Let us have it now. Get an honest person to head the Commission and let us investigate each and everything and after that, if I am guilty, the law will take care. Farooq Abdullah does not believe in fooling people," an agitated Abdullah said.

He said that his party has been demonised by the filmmakers for failing to protect the Kashmiri pandits. "But unfortunately, the facts speak the other way round. It was my Lok Sabha MP Pyare Lal Handoo who raised the issue of Kashmiri pandits in Lok Sabha. The debate is very much preserved in the Parliament library.

"It was my government that brought an Act in 1997 The Jammu and Kashmir Migrant Immovable Property (Preservation, protection and Restraint on distress sales). We meant business and not propaganda," he said.

The former chief minister also highlighted that it was his government that had opposed the release of three dreaded terrorists in 1999 in exchange of passengers of hijacked Indian Airline plane during the tenure of the BJP government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

"There were no takers whenever I objected rightfully," Abdullah said, adding "the immediate repercussion of the wrong decision was that we saw an attack on Jammu and Kashmir assembly and later on Parliament".

Abdullah said that he is not ready to take the blame for others' misdeeds.

LG visits SMHS....

asserted that the government is determined to eliminate terrorism and perpetrators of despicable terror attacks will be brought to justice soon.

Earlier, Principal, GMC Srinagar, Prof. Samia Rashid briefed the Lt Governor about the condition of the injured and the healthcare facilities being provided by the hospital.

The Lieutenant Governor was accompanied by Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Pandurang K. Pole; Deputy Commissioner Srinagar; Mohammad Aijaz; Medical Superintendent SMHS hospital, Kanwaljeet Singh and other senior officers of the health department.

Article 370 acted...

Union Territory to look for opportunities to invest in real estate, telecommunications, agriculture etc., he added.

"This is a major change after the BJP removed Article 370," Naqvi said, adding, "Kashmir is now on the path of progress and prosperity."

He said the Kashmiri people were never against India's Constitution, but a handful of families indulging in dynastic politics were protecting Article 370.

"This dynastic politics and the legacy of dishonesty have been finished and as a result, Kashmir has a very positive and constructive environment today. Representatives from the Gulf are visiting the region now," Naqvi said.

Seven new medical colleges, five nursing colleges and an AIIMS are being set up in the Union Territory, he said, adding that people are getting electricity and tap water at their doorstep under schemes such as Har Ghar Nal Yojana.

"People are realising that they have come out of a labyrinth of terrorism," Naqvi said, adding that dynastic politics was playing an important role in strengthening the labyrinth.

Praising Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, he said through the budget, the Centre is trying to extend benefits to Kashmiris.

On the remarks of some Opposition members that Parliament is discussing the budget of the Union Territory instead of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, Naqvi said, "Earlier also, the budget was for Jammu and Kashmir but the money used to go from the Centre. This is not a new thing, whether it was your government or ours."

Moreover, earlier, the money sent by the Centre could never be audited because of Article 370, he pointed out.

"That robbery was 100 per cent exempted," he said.

Naqvi said improving the situation of the people of Jammu and Kashmir is a collective responsibility.

"We all want the people of Jammu, Kashmir; Kargil and Leh to flow in the stream of progress and this has to be strengthened," he said.

Fauzia Khan of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) hoped for the rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits.

"Some concrete action should take place on this front," she said.

Khan also raised the issue of unemployment and said at the time of the District Development Council (DDC) polls, 70,000 jobs were promised.

"However, as on February 2, the rate of unemployment in Jammu and Kashmir was 15 per cent, which is much higher than the average of 6.5 to 7 per cent in the rest of the country," she said.

In the budget, there is a provision of Rs 23,060 crore for the social sector; of which 0.47 per cent is earmarked for labour and employment.

"What is the status of the promised jobs and what are the special interventions?" Khan asked.

Rajni Ashokrao Patil of the Congress said Article 370 was abrogated on August 5, 2019 and the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir taken away, but even after three years and seven months, the situation there is not normal.

Citing a report on the economy of Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370, she said after some months, the Union Territory had lost Rs 178.78 billion and 90,000 jobs in the handicraft and tourism sector. The horticulture sector is in distress and tourism is in shambles. Moreover, the rural economy of Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing a decline for the first time in 70 years, she pointed out.

While Sudhanshu Trivedi of the BJP said Kashmir was always projected and protected by the Opposition parties as a model of secularism, eventually, it had become a challenge to nationalism.

In 1976, when the word "secularism" was inserted into the Constitution through the 42nd amendment, it was not adopted in Jammu and Kashmir due to Article 370.

Khan also referred to an incident of August last year, where some tourists were trapped in adverse conditions in the higher ranges of Pir Panjal in Gulmarg and were rescued by policemen. Their service to humanity should be highlighted by the government but those policemen were rewarded with Rs 100 only, she said.

Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said in Jammu and Kashmir, no rewards are given on the basis of sects and no discrimination is done in this regard.

There was a brief uproar in the House and several members, including Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge, objected to Rai's remarks, questioning under what rules he spoke.

Oppn parties attack...

said, "Another gift of inflation given by the BJP government to the public LPG cylinder in Lucknow is now near the Rs 1000 mark and crosses Rs 1000 in Patna! Elections end, inflation starts..."

Opposing the move, CPI-M leader Sitaram Yechury tweeted, "Modi government's cruel whiplashing of people. Prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas hiked massively. Cascading inflationary impact will push up already soaring prices of all essentials. Inhuman callousness. Withdraw central cess/surcharges now."

TMC's Derek O'Brien also tagged a tweet of Narendra Modi in 2012 and said, "Prime Minister; your tweet from 2012. We Trinamool Congress and others in Opposition raised this issue today in Parliament. You or your ministers chose not to answer us. So trying my luck on Twitter: Thanks."

Modi as then Gujarat chief minister had in 2012 tweeted, "Massive hike in petrol prices is a prime example of the failure of Congress-led UPA. This will put a burden of hundreds of crores on Gujarat."

Shiv Sena leader Priyanka Chaturvedi also said that with elections over, the interests in voters and their woes over the government which claims prices are deregulated have shown how it regulates it for their political gain.

"Elections over and targets achieved, hence the discounts on fuel are also over. It is extremely unfortunate that they are using regulating petrol prices to their advantage and I'm certain that the voters and people of this country recognise that," Chaturvedi said.

"This government, drunk in their arrogance of power, is refusing to acknowledge the pain of the common man of this country," the Shiv Sena leader also said.

Addressing a joint press conference at Vijay Chowk, Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Anand Sharma and Randeep Singh Surjewala alleged the government is attempting a triple assault on the common people by increasing the prices of petrol, diesel and LPG.

"The Modi government has once again exposed its anti-people and anti-poor policy. By raising 80 paise on petrol and diesel, the government has taken out Rs 10,000 crore from the pockets of the poor people today," Kharge told reporters.

He also said that if the government is increasing prices of oil despite purchasing it from Russia and other sources, "it is a loot of people's money, especially of the poor people".

Chowdhury, the leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha, said it was feared that as soon as the results of the elections in five states are out, there will be a huge increase in the price of petrol, diesel, cooking gas, kerosene all over India.

"Today the apprehension we had on this one-sided price hike is turning out true."

"We will stand against this exploitation of the poor both inside the Lok Sabha and outside. No one can stop us in this fight for the common people," Chowdhury said.

Speaking in the same vein, Anand Sharma said it is clear the government was just waiting for the election results to be out to raise the prices.

When the prices of petrol, diesel and gas did not increase during the elections, it can happen even now, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said, adding the government should stop this "attack on the pockets of the people".

Petrol and diesel prices were on Tuesday hiked by 80 paise a litre each while domestic cooking gas LPG rates were increased by Rs 50 per cylinder as state oil firms ended an over four-and-half month hiatus in rate revision, fanning inflation fears.

While LPG rates were last revised on October 6, 2021, petrol and diesel prices had been on a freeze since November 4 as five states, including Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, went to the polls. LPG prices had gone up by close to Rs 100 per cylinder between July and October 6, 2021, triggering criticism.

Petrol, diesel price...

USD 30 per barrel increase in the cost of raw material (crude oil).

Simultaneously, the price of non-subsidised LPG cylinders has been increased to Rs 949.50 per 14.2-kg bottle in the national capital and Mumbai, and to Rs 976 in Kolkata.

While LPG rates were last revised on October 6, 2021, petrol and diesel prices had been on a freeze since November 4 as five states, including Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, went to the polls.

LPG prices had gone up by close to Rs 100 per cylinder between July and October 6, 2021, before criticism halted the monthly revision in rates.

Non-subsidised cooking gas is the one that consumers buy after exhausting their quota of 12 cylinders at subsidised or below market price. However, the government pays no subsidy on LPG in most cities and the price of the refill that consumers, including the poor women who got free connection under the much-talked Ujjwala scheme, buy is the same as non-subsidised or market price LPG.

This is the highest rate ever that subsidised LPG users will pay. The non-subsidised rate had peaked at Rs 1,241 in January 2014, but at that time, the government provided as much as Rs 600 per cylinder subsidy.

Since May 2020, no subsidy has not been provided to consumers except some to those in far-flung areas to make up for higher inland freight.

The resumption of fuel price hikes has fanned concerns of stoking inflation, which is already above the targeted 6 per cent level.

The Opposition parties were quick to attack the government on the price rise, with Congress, TMC and Left parties forcing two adjournments of proceedings in the Rajya Sabha.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said the 'lockdown' on fuel price revision has been removed. "Ask the Prime Minister about the inflation epidemic (and) he will say #ThaliBajao".

"Congratulations to PM Modiji for achieving his 'target' of Rs 1,000 per LPG cylinder in most parts of the country. There will now be daily 'Vikas' in petrol and diesel prices as well. The only affordable things under Modi Govt are communalism & Hatred. Everything else is expensive," Leader of the Opposition in the Upper House Mallikarjun Kharge said in a tweet.

Slamming the price hikes, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said: "Another gift of inflation from the BJP government for the public... LPG cylinder in Lucknow is close to Rs 1,000 and in Patna above Rs 1,000! Elections over; inflation begins".

TMC's Saket Gokhale said with dealer commissions and GST, a cylinder now costs Rs 1,000. "Kerosene prices doubled in just 10 days. When asked in Parliament, govt is flustered. In India, hate films are tax-free while hunger of poor is taxed".

Both LPG and auto fuel prices had been on a freeze despite the cost of raw material spiralling, first because of demand returning with economies globally - rebounding from the pandemic-induced slowdown, and then due to the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

A 5 KG LPG cylinder will now cost Rs 349, while the 10 kg composite bottle will come for Rs 669.

The 19-kg commercial cylinder now costs Rs 2,003.50.

Since June 2017, petrol prices are to be adjusted daily in line with the benchmark international rate in the preceding 15 days. But, rates have been on the freeze since November 4, 2021, just after the Modi government cut excise duty on petrol by Rs 5 per litre and that on diesel by Rs 10 a litre to bring down rates from record-high levels. Most state governments too lowered local sales tax or VAT.

Before these tax reductions, petrol price had touched an all-time high of Rs 110.04 a litre, and diesel came for Rs 98.42. These rates corresponded to Brent soaring to a peak of USD 86.40 per barrel on October 26, 2021. Brent was at USD 82.74 on November 5, 2021, before it started to fall and touched USD 68.87 a barrel in December.

International oil prices started rising again this year and jumped to a 14-year high of USD 140 per barrel earlier this month. Brent was trading at USD 118.59 per barrel on Tuesday. To compound things, the Indian rupee tumbled against the US dollar, making imports costlier. India relies on overseas purchases to meet about 85 per cent of its oil requirement, making it one of the most vulnerable in Asia to higher oil prices.

7 new COVID...

from Jammu and five from Kashmir division of the Union Territory, the officials said, adding Srinagar district recorded a maximum of four new infections.

Seventeen of the total 22 districts in the Union Territory did not report any fresh cases. There are 99 active cases, while the number of recoveries stands at 4,48,720, the officials said.

