

Urban growth key to India's rise as 3rd largest economy: PM

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A focus on the economy of India's urban centres will help hasten the country's march towards becoming the world's third-largest economy, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, addressing an event in Gujarat's capital Gandhinagar on Tuesday.

"Today, we are the world's fourth largest economy. Any one will feel happy that we have left Japan behind. I remember that when we had become the fifth largest (economy), there was a great deal of enthusiasm in the country, as we had left behind the UK which had ruled us for 150 years."

"Now, the pressure of be-

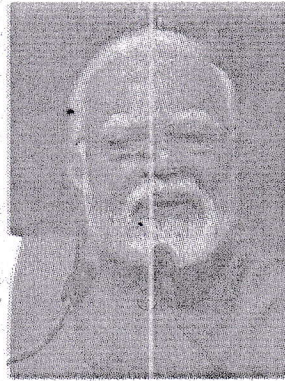
coming the third largest economy is increasing, and this pressure is more than the happiness of becoming the fourth largest economy."

"The country does not have the patience to wait any longer," Modi said while addressing a function held to commemorate 20 years of the urban growth story of Gujarat.

Currently, the economies of the US, China and Germany stand ahead of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

"If we focus on the economy of urban centres in the country, then we can quickly become the third largest economy," the PM told the gathering.

"The growth centres (that will drive India towards be-



PM Narendra Modi addressing Gujarat Urban Development Year 2025 in Gandhinagar on Tuesday VIJAY SONEJI

coming the third largest economy) will be urban areas. We will have to plan to make urban bodies the growth

centres of our economy. The cities should be centres of rapid economic activity."

"Now we will also have to focus on tier-2 and tier-3 cities, and they should become centres for economic activity," he added.

ANNUAL TARGETS

The PM asked those associated with the urban bodies in India to set annual targets to improve the economy of these respective bodies. He suggested that tier-2 and 3 cities focus on adding value to agricultural produce procured from nearby villages.

The Prime Minister said that 2 lakh start-ups in the country, mostly based in tier-2 and 3 cities, can also lead the growth charge.

Modi called for improving

infrastructure and education levels in tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

Speaking at the event, Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal Khattar, said India, already the third country with the longest metro rail network, is poised to overtake the US. "We already have a network of metro rail in our cities which is 1,000 km-long. We are currently in the third place (with regard to the length of metro rail networks)."

"In the first place is China and then stands the US. We have 950 km of metro rail currently under construction, and in the next 2-3 years, we will overtake the US and reach the second position," Khattar said.