

Priyanka Gandhi holds roadshow in Saharanpur, says those in power worship 'satta' not 'Shakti'

SAHARANPUR, APR 17: Attacking the BJP, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday said those ruling the country are not worshippers of "satya (truth) or 'Maa Shakti' but only of 'satta' (power)".

She was speaking during her first roadshow in Uttar Pradesh in support of the INDIA bloc candidate from Saharanpur Imran Masood, hours before the campaigning for the first phase of Lok Sabha elections came to an end.

The roadshow covered a distance of about two kilometres in areas with a sizeable Muslim population. It started from the Jain Bagh area, passed through Raiwala, JBS Inter College, Kambh Bridge and ended at the Qutub Sher police station area.

Addressing a large crowd, she appealed to them to make Masood victorious with an overwhelming majority.

"The people in power are not worshippers of 'satya' (truth) or 'Maa Shakti' (Goddess Shakti) but only of 'satta' (power).

"For 'satta', they can go to any extent, they can topple governments, buy MLAs and give the country's assets to the rich," she said.

Her remarks come in the backdrop of the BJP attacking the Congress over its leader Rahul Gandhi's "fight against Shakti" remark and accusing the opposition party of insulting Hindu Gods.

Targeting the BJP, the Congress leader claimed that "if there is no glitch in EVM, these people are not



going to win more than 180 seats." The Congress general secretary also attacked the ruling party over the electoral bonds issue.

"If the electoral bond is transparent then why was the list not made available to the people earlier? It was only when the Supreme Court intervened that the list came out," she said "The company which was earning a profit of Rs 180 crore donated Rs 1100 crores to BJP. Black money was converted into white through electoral bonds," she alleged, adding that it has exposed "Modi's corruption".

"Modi ji is not worried about the farmers of the country. The farmers kept sitting in Delhi for many months for their rights but Modi ji did not hear.

"A farmer is committing suicide over a loan of Rs 10,000, but Adani's Rs 16 lakh crore was waived in one go," she claimed.

Speaking to the electorate in the Muslim-dominated area, she said, "You people believe in Prophet Mohammad because he fought for you. He always stood with you, he had no

tion did not allow the roadshow to go ahead after the passage of the permitted time due to which she could not reach the Congress Committee office.

A sizeable number of Samajwadi Party workers were present in the road show waving flags and banners of their party walking along with enthusiastic Congress members.

In a post on X, Priyanka Gandhi said "I am overwhelmed by the love of the people of Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh. This enthusiasm, this zeal and this passion is a sign of the coming change.

"People who are disappointed with unemployment and inflation are now beginning to see hope for change. This enthusiasm is a reflection of that hope. The departure of the BJP, which has done injustice to the people, is certain. India will unite, India will win." Clad in a pink saree and riding atop an open vehicle with Imran Masood, Gandhi acknowledged the crowds present on both sides of the road with folded hands.

She also waved at the locals who showered flowers and confetti from rooftops. Priyanka Gandhi was to visit Siddha Peeth Shakumbhari Devi before the road show in Saharanpur, but in view of the huge crowd of devotees on the festival of Ram Navami, the district administration did not allow it.

Extensive arrangements were made by the administration to provide foolproof security to the leaders during the roadshow.

Taking a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Priyanka Gandhi said, "Modi ji does not pay attention towards the poor, his attention is only towards the 'Dhannaseths' (capitalists). It is these Dhannaseths of Modi who are running the country." The roadshow was scheduled to begin at 10 am but started at around 12 noon as Priyanka Gandhi's arrival was delayed.

The district administra-

Govt divided farmers, orchestrated split in Samyukt Kisan Morcha: Rakesh Tikait

NEW DELHI, APR 17: Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait has attacked the BJP, alleging that the split in the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), which had led the 2020-21 farmers' movement, was orchestrated by its government at the Centre.

Under the SKM's banner, a large number of farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, had held a year-long protest on Delhi's border points -- Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur -- against the now-repealed three farm laws.

The SKM was created so that farmers can be united, said Tikait, whose outfit was among the 41 organisations that came together under the banner of the SKM to protest against the laws. Now, a number of new farmer unions are being formed to divide farmers, he claimed and added that this is part of a "conspiracy".

"I said at the beginning of this (Delhi Chalo) protest that it will go on till the (Lok Sabha) elections are over. Some members of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), posing as farmers, misguided people. Some ministers talked to them about how to break the SKM. This could be done only by creating a new SKM, which the government can hold dialogues with," he said.

He said the split and the ongoing protest have served their purposes. These are sidelining of the original SKM leadership, and maligning the Punjab government and the Sikh community, Tikait said.

"It (the SKM (Non-Political)) would be called a second movement... so that they can sideline SKM leaders and create a new leadership. The morcha (march) has been stopped at the (Shambhu) border because the state government is of another party, that party will be blamed, and the Sikh community and farmers' organisations



that (Delhi Chalo) movement. They (SKM (Non-Political) and KMM) are talking with the central government," he said.

The SKM is not part of the ongoing protest of the SKM (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) over farmers' demands, including a legal guarantee for minimum support price (MSP) for crops and farm debt waiver.

The agitation started on February 13 with the organisations' calling for a "Delhi Chalo" march, and since then, farmers, mainly from Punjab, are at camping in the Shambhu border after being stopped by the Haryana Police.

Referring to the past clashes between protesters and police at the border, Tikait said the SKM has condemned the use of force against farmers. However, the splinter group (the SKM (Non-Political)) has not tried to initiate any discussions with the SKM, he claimed.

"Our effort for the last two years has been that the SKM remains together and any call is given together. The SKM is not a part of

will be maligned," he said. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is in power in Punjab and a majority of farmers in the ongoing protest at the Shambhu border are from the state.

On the clashes at the border, Tikait said, "The SKM has held programmes across the country against the atrocities committed on them. But even today, they (the SKM (Non-Political)) don't want to talk." He alleged that a number of new farmer organisations are being formed at the behest of the BJP-led central government to divide the farmers.

"There are 37 farmer organisations registered in Noida by the name of Bharatiya Kisan Union. Even MLAs are heading such organisations. More such organisations will be formed on caste lines and based on crops. It is the priority of the government of India to create 30-to-40 new organisations in every district so that people can be divided," Tikait alleged.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader accused the Centre of conspiring against farmer groups that have been putting pressure on the government over farmers' demands, including MSP according to the C2+50 (input cost of capital+50 per cent) formula suggested by the MS Swaminathan Committee and a legal guarantee of procurement of crops at MSP.

"The government is conspiring... We created the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, and whoever agrees with

our ideology, will join the morcha," he said.

Talking about the incidents of January 26, 2021, when some farmers during a tractor march in Delhi forcibly entered the Red Fort, Tikait alleged that "police led the protesters".

There were tractors outside the the 17th century monument and clashes with police in the ITO area. "The Delhi Police and all other police forces were hatching conspiracies. The January 26 incident was a conspiracy, what happened on January 27-28 was also a conspiracy," he claimed.

On January 28, 2021, the Uttar Pradesh government had ordered farmers to vacate the Ghazipur border and police had tried to remove them by cutting electricity and water connections to the protest site.

Thousands of farmers from western Uttar Pradesh reached the Ghazipur border the next day, and the protest intensified. Tikait said they had information that a large number of people may die if they were removed from the protest site.

"We knew about this a month before it happened. We knew 1,000-1,500 people may get killed when this movement is removed. We had said that this will be our place of attaining martyrdom...", he said on the happenings of January 2021.

"They led us to the Red Fort. If farmers wanted to go, we would have gone to Parliament. They did not give us the route we wanted. We said we would take an U-turn from Akshardham, and the press would be on NH-24. Police personnel in civil clothes told people to go to the Red Fort," Tikait said.

"They cut our water, electricity, and we also gave a call... We said we will die here," he said.

The BKU leader alleged that the government continues to hatch conspiracies.

PM Rishi Sunak tells Israel's Netanyahu to exercise restraint in wake of Iran's missile attacks

LONDON, APR 17: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has called on his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu to exercise restraint and let "calm heads" prevail in the wake of Iran's missile attacks as his Foreign Secretary David Cameron landed in Tel Aviv for talks on Wednesday.

In a phone call, Sunak reiterated the UK's "steadfast support" for regional stability and told the Israeli leader that Iran had miscalculated its move, being isolated on the global stage as a result.

Netanyahu is said to have thanked Britain for its "rapid and robust" support in the face of Iran's unprecedented direct attack on Israel on Saturday.

"The Prime Minister [Sunak] said Iran had badly miscalculated and was increasingly isolated on the global stage, with the G7 coordinating a diplomatic response," Downing Street



said in a readout of the call on Tuesday evening.

"He stressed that significant escalation was in no one's interest and would only deepen insecurity in the Middle East. This was a moment for calm heads to prevail," the statement said.

On the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza, Sunak told Netanyahu that he remained gravely concerned about the deepening humanitarian crisis.

"The UK wanted to see a massive step change in aid access to flood Gaza with

vital supplies, including Israel opening up new aid routes as quickly as possible. The Prime Minister said it was deeply disappointing that Hamas blocked a deal at the weekend that would have saved Palestinian lives and secured the safe release of hostages," Downing Street added.

The call will form the backdrop for Cameron's discussions in Israel, where he is expected to meet Netanyahu and senior Israeli officials and attempt to talk the country out of retaliat-

ing to Iran's assault.

The visit will include meetings in the occupied West Bank, after which Cameron will travel to a gathering of Group of Seven (G7) ministers in Italy to discuss further sanctions on Iran.

The UK has condemned Iran's "reckless and dangerous escalation" in the region and called on all sides to show restraint after Tehran's "barrage of 300 missiles and drones" targeted Israel over the weekend.

India has called for an "immediate de-escalation" of hostilities between Iran and Israel and called for a "return to the path of diplomacy". External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has held phone calls with his counterparts in Iran and Israel, following which Indian officials are expected to be allowed access to its crew on a ship with Israeli links seized by Iranian troops.

AAP leaders Atishi, Saurabh Bharadwaj and Jasmine Shah were also present at the press conference.

Atishi, a minister in the Delhi government, said, "We are implementing the concept of 'Ram Rajya' in Delhi and Punjab. We want to spread the public welfare work being done by the AAP in the country and the world through this website."

Reciting a verse from the Ramcharitamanas, she said, "Just like Lord Ram fulfilled all his promises amid hardships, Kejriwal is fighting all the difficulties and working for the people and fulfilling his promises in the same manner."

Lok Sabha election a fight between two ideologies: Rahul Gandhi

MANDYA (KARNATAKA), APR 17: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday termed the upcoming Lok Sabha elections as a battle between two ideologies -- INDIA bloc "fighting for the Constitution" on one hand and BJP, which wants to "abolish constitution and democracy", on the other.

He said if the INDIA bloc is voted to power, it will be a "government of ordinary citizens, farmers, labourers and traders", while highlighting his party's manifesto for the polls.

"This is the fight between

two ideologies. There is Congress and INDIA bloc on one hand, which fought for the Constitution, gave Constitution and democracy to the country. On the other hand there is BJP, which wants to abolish the Constitution and democracy and is placing their people in all the institutions," Gandhi said, addressing an election rally here. While the BJP government "belonged to 22 to 25 rich people", Congress will give a government which will work for the ordinary citizens, farmers, labourers and traders, he

said. This is his first visit to the Congress-governed Karnataka after the election schedule was announced a month ago.

In Mandya, the Congress is facing JD(S) which is BJP's alliance partner. There is a direct contest between JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy and Congress' Venkataramane Gowda, popularly known as 'Star Chandru' here.

The Congress had secured only one seat in the 2019 general elections in Karnataka, which has a total of 28 constituencies. BJP had bagged 25 while an inde-

pendent candidate backed by the party had also emerged victorious. JD(S), which fought the elections in alliance with the Congress back then, won in one seat. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has said the party will win 15 to 20 seats in the state this time around. Mandya will vote in the first of the two phase elections in Karnataka.

While 14 constituencies in the southern part of the state are going for election on April 26, the second phase voting for the northern districts will be held on May 7.

Aam Aadmi Party launches 'AAP Ka RamRajya' website to showcase party's concept of 'Ram Rajya'

NEW DELHI, APR 17: AAP on Wednesday launched its "AAP Ka RamRajya" website for the Lok Sabha polls campaign to showcase the party's concept of "Ram Rajya", saying Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tried to realise the ideals of Lord Ram in the national capital.

The launch of the website -- aapkarajya.com -- came ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, the first phase of which will be held on Friday, and coincided with the Ram Navami festival being celebrated in several parts of the country.

During a joint press conference, Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said the

website will showcase AAP's concept of "Ram Rajya" as well as the work done by the party's governments.

"Chief Minister Kejriwal accomplished wonderful things -- good schools, mohalla clinics, free water and electricity and free bus rides for women -- in the last 10 years for realising 'Ram Rajya'," Singh said.

This is the first time that Kejriwal is not among his people on Ram Navami, Singh said and alleged that the Delhi chief minister was sent to jail in a "baseless" case on the basis of statements from "false" witnesses.

"In Arvind Kejriwal's concept of 'Ram Rajya', no one is big or small and

the idea is to work in the interest of all. Keeping this in mind, AAP's Lok Sabha campaign website has been launched on Ram Navami," Singh said.

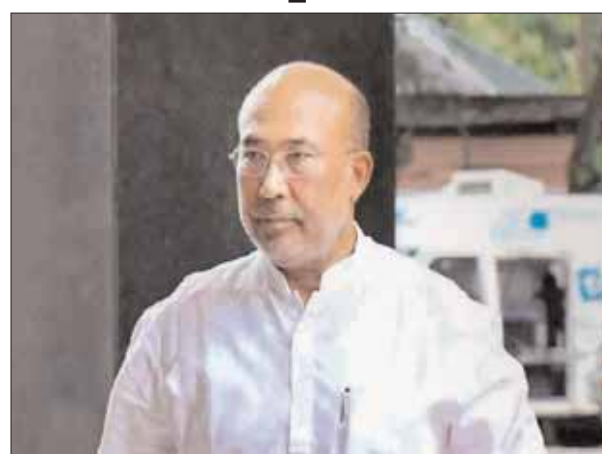
The world is learning from the work being done by Arvind Kejriwal and the AAP government, he claimed.

"Earlier, people used to say 'learn from America' but now the American president's wife comes to India and says she wants to see schools built by Arvind Kejriwal. Now, Americans learn from Kejriwal's work," the senior leader said, referring to former US First Lady Melania Trump's visit to a Delhi government school in February 2020.

Peace talks should never compromise core issues of state: Manipur CM N Biren Singh

IMPHAL, APR 17: Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Wednesday asserted that any form of peace talks between the warring communities should not compromise the territorial integrity of the state and must ensure the protection of the indigenous population.

Speaking at the launch of the 'Sankalp Patra' at the BJP party office here, Singh said, "The peace talks should not compromise the territorial integrity of the state and the well being of our indigenous people. We will not accept peace negotiations that dilute these fundamental issues." He added, "During his recent visit, Union Home Minister



Amit Shah had unequivocally said the BJP is committed to preserving the unity of Manipur." Singh highlighted Shah's acknowledgment of attempts by illegal immigrants to disrupt the demographic

balance in the state, stating, "This fact is unknown to the opposition." Speaking on the contents of the BJP manifesto, Singh said whatever Prime Minister Narendra Modi promises is always implemented.

"Modi's compassion was evident when the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) was lifted from 19 police station areas in the state, considering its impact on the youth and sections of society," he commented.

Singh appealed to people to ensure the victory of BJP's Inner Manipur candidate Basantakumar Singh, who is also a member of the Cabinet sub-committee set up by the state government to identify illegal immigrants in the state.

Formal peace talks between apex civil bodies of the Meiteis and Kukis to bring an amicable solution is yet to begin.