

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Healthcare is public trust, doctors play vital role in nation-building: VP Radhakrishnan

DEHRADUN, APR 23: Medical professionals play a vital role in nation-building and must view healthcare as a public trust, Vice President C P Radhakrishnan said here on Thursday.

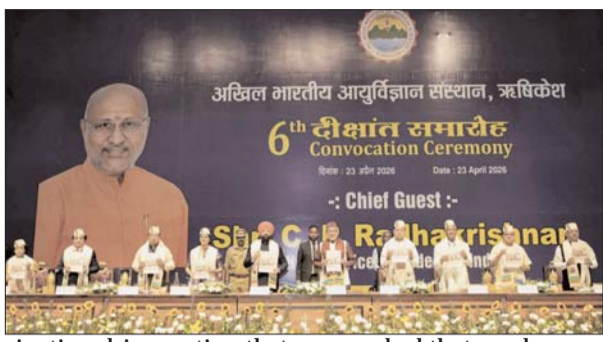
Addressing the sixth convocation ceremony of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh, he described the graduation as a defining moment of transition, reflection and responsibility.

The vice president noted that the spiritual setting of Rishikesh, a global centre for healing and gateway to the Himalayas, adds deeper meaning to the solemnity of the ceremony.

He urged the graduates to embrace their professional duties with dedication and a sense of purpose.

Reflecting on the COVID-19 period, the vice president said India demonstrated resilience, innovation, and commitment under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He highlighted India's vac-



ination drive, noting that over 140 crore citizens received free vaccines to ensure equitable healthcare access. He further emphasised that Indian scientists developed vaccines for the welfare of humanity rather than profit.

He added that the Vaccine Maitri initiative supplied vaccines to over 100 countries, reflecting the spirit of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" and India's role as a compassionate global partner.

The vice president noted that the establishment of new AIIMS institutions over the last decade strengthened access to quality healthcare in underserved regions. He

remarked that good governance lies in understanding and serving the needs of the people.

The vice president praised AIIMS Rishikesh for combining clinical care, research, and innovation, while remaining guided by empathy and integrity.

The event was attended by Uttarakhand Governor Lt Gen Gurmit Singh (Retd), Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, and Union Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel.

AIIMS Rishikesh President Prof Raj Bahadur and Executive Director Prof Meenu Singh were also present alongside faculty members and students. (Agencies)

Dehradun Expressway.

He commended the Uttarakhand government under Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami for promoting inclusive development and improving healthcare delivery.

Radhakrishnan emphasised that healthcare is a public trust and medical professionals play a vital role in nation-building.

He urged the doctors to contribute through preventive care, rural outreach, research, and innovation, while remaining guided by empathy and integrity.

The event was attended by Uttarakhand Governor Lt Gen Gurmit Singh (Retd), Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, and Union Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel.

AIIMS Rishikesh President Prof Raj Bahadur and Executive Director Prof Meenu Singh were also present alongside faculty members and students. (Agencies)

BJP scored double 'F' in ensuring fuel, fertilizer security for nation: Kharage

NEW DELHI, APR 23:

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday alleged that the Modi government has scored a "double" failure grade in ensuring fuel and fertiliser security for India, and tried to deflect its failures through "delimitation theatrics".

Kharge also took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying he should heed to his own "Mardarshak Mandal" member Murlu Manohar Joshi, who recently stated that "we should not use the rhetoric of Vishwaguru anymore".

Kharge's swipe came days after Joshi said India is not a 'vishwaguru' (global teacher) anymore and this term should not be used.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an event here, Joshi had made a strong pitch for making Sanskrit India's official language, saying many people, including B R Ambedkar, made efforts for it in the past, but the proposals were not cleared.

In a post on X, Kharge



said, "Modi government tried to deflect its failures and serious Epstein file allegations, through delimitation theatrics, but India saw through the charade. The BJP has scored a DOUBLE 'F' (Fail) in ensuring Fuel & Fertilizer security for the nation." On fuel, Kharge said production is down, import diversification fails, our ships in the Strait of Hormuz are unable to secure safe passage. "14 Indian-flagged vessels remain stranded there since 54 days. India's crude

oil production has been falling for the 11th consecutive year in 2025-26, all thanks to Modi Govt. Overall crude production has collapsed by nearly 22% since 2014-15," he said.

Gas output has suffered an even more shocking decline of around 40%, falling from 47,555 MMSCM in 2011-12 to just 28,672 MMSCM in 2020-21, Kharge said.

"Now, the Modi Govt has stopped ANY new LPG connection. After long queues, 45-day wait for Rural India

to book a cylinder, to black-marketing, the people bore the brunt of "Sab Changa Si" (All is well) denials!" he said. On fertiliser, Kharge said even before geopolitical disruptions, fertiliser shortages were already being reported across multiple seasons.

"Indian farmers painfully suffer the consequences of BJP's apathy! Fertilizer production has now fallen to a 5-year-low in March 2026, with a massive 24.6% year-on-year drop. China has already restricted specialised fertilizers in July 2025, but Modi government did not bother to diversify imports. Russia has also now halted fertilizer exports," he said.

"Perhaps PM Modi, should heed to his own Mardarshak Mandal member, Shri Murlu Manohar Joshi, who recently said that we should not use the rhetoric of 'Vishwaguru' anymore!" Kharge said. He also shared a picture montage of news reports with the caption 'Fuel Security Floundered Under BJP'. (Agencies)

Memorial records reveal common themes of neglect in people with chronic fatigue syndrome

NEW DELHI, APR 23:

An analysis of memorial records of 505 people who lived with chronic fatigue syndrome has revealed themes of systemic and clinical neglect, personal burden and quality of life, among others.

Findings published in the journal PLOS One also point to themes of institutional failure, including a lack of acknowledgement by health and insurance authorities, and a social disconnection.

Researchers from the US' Iowa State University analyzed entries in the National Chronic Fatigue and Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS) Foundation's publicly available list of memorial records for people with myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS).

The chronic condition is characterised by symptoms of severe exhaustion, often

along with sleep and cognitive difficulties—but there is a lack of clarity around its diagnosis and treatment.

"Themes emerged within four societal levels: systemic neglect and institutional failure; clinical neglect and failures; social disconnection and advocacy; and personal burden and quality of life," the authors wrote.

On the theme of systemic neglect and institutional failure, memorial records recounted a lack of acknowledgement by health, insurance, and disability authorities, and a lack of investment in research and treatment of ME/CFS at the government level, they said.

One record stated, "[She] had found some help at the only hospital [county] that treats CFIDS/ME but was denied funding by her local health authority for any further treatment and her health deteriorated dramati-

cally."

The researchers also pointed to negative healthcare experiences of the affected, which included a misdiagnosis and misattribution of symptoms, dismissal, an inadequate knowledge and experience with treating ME/CFS, and a recommendation of unhelpful treatments.

The team found another record on the theme of personal burden and quality of life that stated, "She said, 'My life has become an inhumane existence.' She left a husband and two teenaged children whom she referred to when she said, 'I believe they have lost their mother to ME.'"

The authors said insights from the study could help guide further ME/CFS research.

They added that analysing more than 500 memorial entries revealed people living with ME/CFS were affected

not only by impairing symptoms, but also by widespread systemic, clinical, and social neglect.

"These narratives suggest that dismissal, stigma, misdiagnosis, and lack of institutional support not only impair quality of life but are frequently perceived as playing a role in the circumstances surrounding death of individuals with ME/CFS," the team said.

Memorial narratives can offer a unique insight into lived experiences not captured in clinical records or epidemiological statistics, "a gap that is particularly significant for a condition that has historically been poorly understood," the authors said.

"What struck us most was the consistency with which people with ME/CFS were described as having been dismissed or misheard by systems intended to help them," they said. (PTI)

'Why have an election': Kapil Sibal slams EC

NEW DELHI, APR 23:

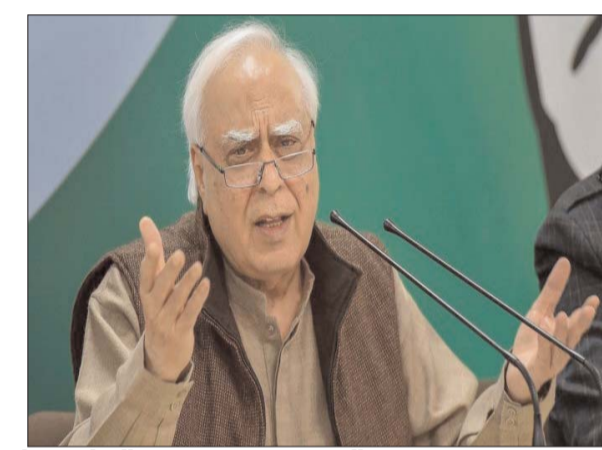
Former law minister Kapil Sibal on Thursday launched a scathing attack on the Election Commission, accusing it of carrying out an "experiment in disenfranchisement" in West Bengal and asked "why have an election".

The Rajya Sabha MP also took a swipe at Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, saying he must be awarded with a Padma Bhushan.

In a post on X, Sibal said, "Election Commission: (West Bengal Election). Experiment in disenfranchisement. The CEC must be awarded with a Padma Bhushan!"

"My question: Why have an election?" Sibal said.

West Bengal is voting in the first phase on Thursday amid an increasingly polarised battle in which issues such as corruption and jobs have ceded space to identity, citizenship and the controversy over deleted names from



electoral rolls.

Sibal on Wednesday had accused Kumar of working in cahoots with the BJP to make the party win the West Bengal elections, saying he is a "national shame" and it is his "vocation" to make sure that the BJP emerges victorious.

The Independent Rajya Sabha MP had also come down heavily on the BJP-led Centre and the Election Commission (EC) over the massive deployment of security personnel for the Bengal

polls.

Questioning the use of the logical discrepancy argument for "disenfranchising" people in Bengal, Sibal said, "They did not use this in Maharashtra and Haryana but are using it in West Bengal."

"They are using the logical discrepancy argument to disenfranchise voters, meaning if there is a less than 15-year gap between the voter and his/her father, his/her name is deleted, if there is more than 50 years difference, the

name is deleted And all this is done through AI," Sibal had said at a press conference here.

It is the chief election commissioner who is the logical discrepancy in this country, Sibal said, adding that nothing that the top poll official says is logical.

"His discrepancy is stamped all over West Bengal. It is a shame that we have an election commissioner of this nature. It is an absolute national shame. It is also a national shame that nobody is doing anything about it," Sibal said.

The opening round of the two-phase West Bengal election covers 152 of the state's 294 seats, including all 54 in north Bengal's eight districts and several in Murshidabad, Nadia, Birbhum and Hooghly.

The second phase of elections would take place on April 29 and the results would be declared on May 4. (PTI)

Britain, France will sign 3-year deal to curb small-boat Channel crossings

PARIS, APR 23: Britain and France are set to unveil a new multimillion-euro deal Thursday aimed at reducing the number of migrants crossing the English Channel in small boats, with increased police patrols and enhanced surveillance in northern France.

Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood and French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez are to sign the three-year agreement during a joint visit to the region.

Under the deal, the UK will provide 500 million pounds (USD 675 million) to strengthen measures in northern France, with an additional 160 million pounds (USD 216 million) depending on the success of new tactics to curb Channel crossings. If those efforts fail, the additional funding will be halted after one year, the Home Office said.

The agreement provides for boosting the number of officers deployed on the ground from 907 now to 1,392 for the 2026-2029 period, along with the creation of an additional police unit dedicated to combating irregular migration, funded by France, the French Interior Ministry said.

It will also include the deployment of new technologies aimed at reducing departures of so-called "taxi boats," the term authorities



use for small motorised vessels, usually inflatable, used by smugglers to pick up migrants along long stretches of the northern French coast.

Unlike boats that migrants carry into the water themselves, "taxi boats" typically set off largely empty from secluded coastal areas and pick up migrants at pre-arranged meeting points on beaches.

The deal also expands surveillance capabilities through drones, helicopters and electronic monitoring, to better prevent crossing attempts.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said cooperation between the two countries had "already stopped tens of thousands of crossings" and that "this historic agreement means we can go further — ramping up intelligence, surveillance and boots on the ground to protect Britain's borders."

So far this year, arrivals in the UK have fallen by more than half compared with the same period in 2025, according to the French interior ministry.

Police operations led to the arrest of 480 smugglers last year, it said.

A large share of the resources provided under the deal will be deployed from early summer, traditionally the busiest period for crossing attempts as weather conditions improve.

Earlier this month, two men and two women died as they were trying to board an inflatable boat off the coast of northern France. British authorities arrested a man from Sudan on Friday on suspicion of endangering life in that case.

The new agreement builds on the Sandhurst Treaty, first signed in 2018 and renewed in 2023.

Polling Begins For 152 Assembly Seats In 1st Phase Of Bengal Elections

KOLKATA, APR 23:

Voting is underway on Thursday in 152 constituencies in the first phase of the West Bengal assembly elections, amid unprecedented security arrangements and a high-stakes battle that could shape the direction of the entire contest.

Polling started at 7 am with voters queuing up outside booths in districts ranging from Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri in the north to Murshidabad, Nadia, Birbhum and Hooghly in the south, officials said.

The opening round covers more than half of the state's 294 assembly seats and is being seen as the BJP's best opportunity to make an early breakthrough and the ruling Trinamool Congress' most important test in its bid for a fourth consecutive term.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed to voters, particularly young electors and women, to exercise their franchise in large numbers.

"Phase 1 of the West Bengal Assembly elections takes place today. I urge all citizens to participate in this festival of democracy with full strength. I especially appeal to my young friends and to the women of West Bengal to vote in large numbers," Modi said on X.

According to the Election Commission, over 3.60 crore electors are eligible to vote in



this phase, including around 1.75 crore women and 465 third-gender voters.

A record 2,450 companies of central paramilitary forces, comprising nearly 2.5 lakh personnel, have been deployed across the state for the polls, with over 8,000 polling stations identified as highly sensitive.

The Election Commission has placed districts such as Malda, Murshidabad, Uttar Dinajpur, Cooch Behar, Birbhum and Purba Bardhaman under special surveillance.

More than 2,193 quick response teams, surveillance units and flying squads have also been deployed to prevent violence and ensure free and fair polling.

West Bengal Governor RN Ravi appealed to voters, especially youths and women, to participate in the polling process.

In a message posted on the Lok Bhavan X handle, Ravi said, "First phase of the West Bengal Assembly elections is underway today. I urge every voter, particularly the youth and women, to enthusiastically take part in the most sacred festival of democracy and exercise their votes without failing."

Emphasising the importance of each ballot, he added, "Every vote is sacred. It has the power to shape the future of West Bengal."

The first phase assumes political significance because it includes all 54 seats in north Bengal, the region that powered the BJP's rise in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections and helped it emerge as the principal challenger to the TMC in the 2021 assembly polls.

Of the 152 seats, the BJP had won 59 in 2021, while the TMC had secured 93.

For the saffron camp, retaining its dominance in north Bengal is crucial if it is to remain in contention in the statewide battle. For the TMC, led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, preventing a BJP sweep in the north is equally important to establish momentum before the second round.

This phase is also being closely watched because it comes after the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, which resulted in the deletion of around 91 lakh names from the state's voter list.

The controversy has sharply polarised the campaign, with the BJP alleging that the revision weeded out infiltrators and bogus voters, while the TMC has accused the Centre and the Election Commission of disenfranchising genuine electors, especially minorities and migrant workers.

Several high-profile candidates are in the fray in the first phase.

Key candidates in this phase include leader of the opposition Suwendu Adhikari (BJP, Nandigram), former Union minister Nisith Pramanik (BJP, Mathabhanga), state minister Udayan Guha (TMC, Dinahata), Goutam Deb (TMC, Siliguri), and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury (Congress, Baharampur).