

CPI(M) still a challenge for BJP in Tripura, says CM Manik Saha

STATE TIMES NEWS

AGARTALA: Though the CPI(M) has been out of power in Tripura for six years, the Left party is still a major political force in the state and cannot be ignored by the ruling BJP, Chief Minister Manik Saha said.

The CPI(M) has supporters and well-wishers since it ruled the state first for a decade from 1978 to 1988, and then for 25 years - between 1993 and 2018, he told PTI in an interview.

Stating that winning an election - be it Lok Sabha or civic bodies - is not always as easy as it may appear, Saha said the party has lost two major constituencies in last year's Assembly elections.

He was referring to Agartala and Banamalipur constituencies, in both of which the saffron party lost to the Congress. Saha, however, expressed confidence that the BJP candidates in the state's two Lok Sabha seats - former chief minister Biplab Kumar Deb (Tripura West) and Kriti Singh Debbarma (Tripura East) - will emerge victorious.



"Prime Minister Narendra Modi-ji has set a target of 370 for the party and 400 for the NDA. We are working hard to achieve the milestone and believe we will cross the target," the chief minister said.

"The BJP doesn't take its opponents lightly in any elections. Therefore, we are not complacent. We are aware of potential challengers and going all out to win the elections," he said, referring to the CPI(M).

The Left party secured 17.5 per cent of the votes polled in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. During the assembly polls four years later, its vote share was 24.62 per cent. The party in a tie-up with the Congress contested

in 43 seats and won 11, five less than its 2018 tally.

Saha criticised the opposition INDIA bloc's allegation that the country's democracy came under attack under Modi.

"The communists in Tripura have a history of bloodshed as hundreds of killings took place during its regime. South Tripura district alone witnessed 69 murders of opposition party leaders and workers. Even a sitting minister and few MLAs were murdered during the Left's regime," he said.

The then health minister Bimal Sinha, along with his brother, was gunned down by National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) insurgents on March 31, 1998. At that

time, the Congress was the main opposition in the state.

"The northeast's history of bloodshed has been literally erased by PM Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah," he said.

The chief minister wondered how the Congress formed an alliance with the Left party in the assembly election last year.

Saha said that Tripra Motha joining the BJP-led government just ahead of the Lok Sabha elections has increased the strength of the saffron party, especially in the tribal belt.

The Tripra Motha, which was the main opposition party in Tripura with 13 MLAs in the 60-member assembly, joined the government on March 7. Five days before that, the party signed a tripartite agreement with the Centre and the Tripura government to resolve all issues of the indigenous people of the state.

"But it doesn't mean the BJP will undermine the growth of Janajati Moreha, our tribal wing in the state. We have as many as seven

frontal organizations and Janajati Moreha is one of them," he said adding that the party has become strong because of the good work of all its frontal wings.

The BJP nominated Kriti Singh Debbarma from the East Tripura (ST) constituency. She is also the sister of Pradyot Debbarma, the Tripra Motha founder and a scion of the erstwhile royal family of the northeastern state.

Saha claimed that the BJP and its allies are getting good responses from people during campaigns.

"Wherever the party leaders visit, they find smiles on the faces of people. It shows that the people are happy with the BJP rule in the state. This is because of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's relentless work for the people of all sections of the society," he said.

Saha said Modi had facilitated as many as 12 accords with various insurgent organizations and states in the northeastern region to restore peace and bring development.

Mohun Bagan and Mumbai City clash for right to lift ISL League Shield

STATE TIMES NEWS

KOLKATA: Table-toppers Mumbai City FC will battle with Mohun Bagan Super Giant at the iconic Salt Lake Stadium here on Monday in a potentially blockbuster match that will decide the ISL league stage winners. Mumbai City FC have accumulated 47 points from 21 matches, having won all of their last five games. They are closely trailed by Mohun Bagan, who have 45 points from 21 games. A win here will take the Mariners to 48 points, helping them beat the Islanders to the title. Similarly, a victory for the Islanders will ensure that they lift the coveted League Shield by a margin of five points. Even a draw will be insufficient for the Antonio Lopez Habas-coached Mohun Bagan side to finish atop the standings.

The situation in the league currently is starkly similar to ISL 2020-21. Even back then, the fight for the League Shield had gone to the final day of the league campaign, with the then Sergio Lobera-coached Mumbai City FC edging past Habas' Mariners by 2-0 courtesy first-half strikes by Mourtaqa Fall and Bartholomeu Ogebeche.

Keeping their attacking prowess aside, Mohun Bagan have been firing fairly well at the back too. They have kept clean sheets in each of their last two matches, and the last time they went on a longer such streak was a run of four games from November-December 2022.

The Mariners have also scored in each of their last five home matches. Their previous-best record on this front was a stretch of six such clashes from October-December 2022. In fact, their current five-game stretch is their longest

when scoring multiple goals in a home game. Mumbai City FC have held the upper hand in most of their recent meetings against Mohun Bagan. They have been unbeaten in their previous eight matches against the Mariners, having won six times and drawn twice in these games.

The Islanders seem to have the perfect fix to the offensive powerhouse that the Mohun Bagan boast of. For instance, Mumbai City FC have kept four clean sheets in their last five away games. Prior to that, they had not conceded a goal in a game in four out of only their previous 14 matches on the road, suggesting a tangible recent development on this front.

Mohun Bagan have dynamic wingers in Liston Colaco and Manvir Singh, who can be lethal with their deliveries from the flank. However, the Islanders have conceded only once from a cross this season, the lowest amongst all teams, cutting down a possible area that the Mariners could have intensified their attacks from.

Manvir has had a terrific campaign so far, netting thrice and assisting seven times across 19 appearances in the ISL. He has provided the most assists by an Indian player this season. In fact, if he provides an assist in this game, he will equal Roy Krishna's record for most assists provided in a single season by a Mariner in competition history. On the other hand, Lallianzuala Chhangte inspired Mumbai City FC to an emphatic victory against Odisha FC in their previous match with a goal and an assist each. Chhangte has notched six goals and assists each in 21 league appearances this season.

President, PM, CM greet people of Odisha on Odia New year



STATE TIMES NEWS

BHUBANESWAR: President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik greeted the people of Odisha on the occasion of 'Odia New Year' and 'Maha Bishuba Sankranti' on Sunday.

Murmu in a post on X said: "On the occasion of Pana Sankranti, I extend my heartiest congratulations to the people of Odisha and those living abroad. Pana Sankranti or Maha Bishuba Sankranti is celebrated with joy across Odisha. I wish the dear brothers and sisters of Odisha a happy and prosperous Odia New Year, a symbol of cultural richness. and I pray for the prosperity of the people of the state."

Modi also wished the people of Odisha on Odia New Year and in a post on X said: "Best wishes on Maha Bishuba Pana Sankranti and Odia New Year. We take great pride in the wonderful Odia culture. I pray that the year ahead is full of happiness and success. May all your dreams be fulfilled as well and may everyone be healthy."

Patnaik said: "My heartiest greetings and best wishes to all on the occasion of Maha Bishuba Sankranti and Odia New Year. May the immense mercy of Mahaprabhu Shri Jagannath fill everyone's life with happiness and prosperity."

Marking the celebration of the Maha Bishuba Sankranti, special rituals

are held at Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri. The newly-prepared almanac is read before the sibling deities of Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath.

The people observe fast and offer new clothes, 'pana' (sweet water) to the deities at different temples. The pana is prepared by mixing water, jaggery, yoghurt and spices having cooling properties.

The day is also observed as the birthday of Lord Hanuman.

The people also observe Jhamu Jatra. The people observing Jhamu are called 'Patua' or holy devotees. They end the ritual on the day by walking barefoot on burning charcoal as a part of their penance and to express gratitude to the goddess for having fulfilled their wishes.

The Maha Bishuba Sankranti is observed in different names in various regions of the state, while it is called 'Chadak Parva' in North Odisha, the same is called 'Danda Nata' in the southern region of the state.

No accountability for old guarantees, just empty jugglery of words: Cong on BJP manifesto

STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Sunday trashed the BJP Lok Sabha poll manifesto as a "jumla patra" full of rhetoric, with party chief Mallikarjun Kharge saying that Modi's guarantee is a "warranty of jumlas" as he has failed to fulfil the promises made in the past.

The Congress also accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of not fulfilling promises made on the issue of jobs, doubling of farmers' incomes and tackling price rise and inflation, and alleged that he was now shifting the goalposts by talking about 2047 instead.

Kharge charged that the prime minister did not do any major work during his tenure which would have benefited the people, youth and farmers of the country.

Modi released the BJP's Lok Sabha poll manifesto at the party headquarters here on Sunday. The manifesto has a special focus on the poor, youngsters, farmers and women Kharge said the youth are protesting for jobs and prices of food items have skyrocketed due to inflation and people



are troubled by it, but the manifesto has nothing to say on it.

Modi has only increased unemployment and inflation in the last 10 years, he charged.

"No accountability for old guarantees, just empty jugglery of words! 'Modi ki Guarantee' equals 'warranty of jumlas (rhetoric)," he said in a post in Hindi, posing 14 questions to the PM.

Addressing a joint press conference, Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara said in his 2014 manifesto, Modi had promised to bring back black money by forming a special task force, but electoral bonds came instead.

He also promised to

strengthen law and order in the North East, but today violence is continuing in Manipur, on which PM Modi is maintaining silence, Khara claimed.

Khara also alleged that Modi promised that poverty in 100 districts will be eradicated through a special package, but the figures of the Hunger Index reveal the truth.

The BJP had promised to

build 100 new smart cities but they were never made and instead China is building "smart villages" on the border, the Congress leader said.

"The public is fed up with these promises of Narendra Modi and is extremely angry," he claimed.

"We have strong objections to the name of BJP's 'Sankalp Patra', it should be named 'Maafinama'. Modi ji should have apologised to the Dalits, farmers, youth and tribals of the country," Khara said.

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said, "This is not a manifesto but a 'Jumla patra'."

She said while the Congress set up its manifesto committee in December and collected suggestions from a cross-section of people across the

country, the BJP's manifesto committee was set up 13 days ago and presented their manifesto without any consultations.

"PM Modi, after 10 years of rule, has started befooling people. The claim that 25 crore people were taken out of poverty is hollow and no third party has confirmed it. The truth is that every hour two farmers and two youth are committing suicide in the country.

"In a country where there is maximum joblessness, the mention of jobs comes only twice in the BJP manifesto. There is no mention of legal guarantee to MSP in the manifesto. There is no mention of Manipur or China in the BJP's manifesto," she alleged.

"People are saying enough of your jumlas, it is time to bring another government," Shrinete added.

RCB eye step-up from under fire bowlers against SRH for elusive victory

STATE TIMES NEWS

BENGALURU: Royal Challengers Bengaluru's IPL campaign that began in cheerfulness has melted into chaos, and their bowlers require a drastic transformation in mindset against Sunrisers Hyderabad for them to register an elusive win here on Monday.

The Royal Challengers have players of repute and elite coaches with lofty pedigree but none of their plans have worked so far, evidenced by the team's 10th place in the standings with a solitary win from six matches.

The RCB's trundling run in this IPL is directly linked to their bowlers' ineffectiveness.

They showed a distinct lack of willingness to adapt and upskill on conditions that needed a different thinking.

In this IPL, the bowlers have often relied on variations like knuckle balls, slow bouncers and pace-off deliveries to counter a set of ultra-aggressive batsmen.

However, the Bengaluru bowlers have been largely unidimensional in their approach allowing batters to tackle them with ease and the match against Mumbai Indians offers a case study.

For once, the RCB batters fired collectively to take them to 196, but MI hunted down the target in just 15.3 overs at the Wankhede Stadium as the visiting bowlers were quite magnanimous in offering freebies. Dew, short boundaries etc cannot be counted as excuses when a team leaks above 13 runs per over. In fact, the RCB bowlers did not have the urge or imagination to blurt a batting unit full of intent.

That's an ominous sign against the Sunrisers, whose batting line-up is as intimidating as that of the MI.

Two Hyderabad batters - Heinrich Klaassen (186) and Abhishek Sharma (177) - are inside the top-10 run-makers and Travis Head (133) too has been consistent.



But more than the quantity of runs, how they made it make them more dangerous as Klaassen (193), Abhishek (208) and Head (177) have torn apart the bowling unit in the Power Play and in the middle-overs.

That uniform power allocation through batting ranks makes SRH a tall proposition for the opposition bowlers.

This is not to say that SRH, currently fifth on the table with six points from five matches, do not have a weak point.

Similar to RCB, bowling has been Hyderabad's soft underbelly in this tournament with spinners Shahabaz Ahmed and Mayank Markande giving away more than 11 runs in an over with minimal returns.

But the Hyderabad outfit has found a saviour in skipper Pat Cummins, their highest wicket-taker with six scalps and he has also conceded just over seven runs an over, a very respectable economy rate in this format.

Additionally, Cummins has also shown the flexibility to operate at various junctures of a match - with the new ball in the Power Play or bowling as second-change in the middle and death overs.

The inclusion of left-arm pacer T Natarajan (5 wickets, economy: 8.6) has given their bowling a new dimension and a bit more control in the last three matches.

Having played on a shirtfront in Hyderabad, the SRH bowlers might not feel out of home at the Chinnaswamy, which has a pitch with similar

characteristics. But can RCB exploit that above-mentioned minor chink in Sunrisers' attack?

Star batter Virat Kohli is the current holder of Orange Cap and fifties by skipper Faf du Plessis, Rajat Patidar and Dinesh Karthik against MI will certainly boost RCB's confidence.

But the form of Glenn Maxwell (32 runs, average: 5.3) remains a massive concern. Teams (from): Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Faf du Plessis (c), Glenn Maxwell, Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar, Anuj Rawat, Dinesh Karthik, Suyash Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Sharma, Manoj Bhandage, Mayank Dagar, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Rajan Kumar, Cameron Green, Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil Singh, Saurav Chauhan.

Sunrisers Hyderabad: Pat Cummins (c), Abdul Samad, Abhishek Sharma, Aiden Markram, Marco Jansen, Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Sanvir Singh, Heinrich Klaassen, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, T. Natarajan, Anmolpreet Singh, Mayank Markande, Upendra Singh Yadav, Umran Malik, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Shahbaz Ahmed, Travis Head, Jaydev Unadkat, Akash Singh, Jhathavedh Subramanyam.

Match starts at 7.30 PM.

US & UN condemn Iran's attack on Israel; President Biden to convene G-7 leaders' meeting on response

AGENCY

WASHINGTON: The US, Canada and the UN have condemned the Iranian air attack on Israel, with President Joe Biden reaffirming America's "ironclad commitment" to the Jewish nation and vowing to convene a meeting of the G-7 leaders on Sunday to develop a coordinated response to the brazen assault.

Israel said it and its allies have intercepted the vast majority of more than 200 drones and missiles launched by Iran.

Biden said "We helped Israel take down nearly all" of them.

His comments came as American forces joined efforts to down drones and missiles launched by Tehran.

"Earlier today, Iran-and its proxies operating out of Yemen, Syria and Iraq-launched an unprecedented air attack against military facilities in Israel. I condemn these attacks in the strongest possible terms," Biden said after his call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday.

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) said the attack was aimed at "specific targets".

Iran had vowed to retaliate for a strike on its consulate in Syria on 1 April which killed seven IRGC officers, including a top commander. It accused Israel of carrying out that attack, but Israel neither confirmed nor denied it.



Netanyahu called a war cabinet meeting after the start of the Iranian attack, and later spoke to President Biden, who said he had reaffirmed "America's ironclad commitment to the security of Israel".

Biden said at his direction, to support the defence of Israel, the US military moved aircraft and ballistic missile defence destroyers to the region over the course of the past week.

"Thanks to these deployments and the extraordinary skill of our service members, we helped Israel take down nearly all of the incoming drones and missiles," he said.

"I've just spoken with Prime Minister Netanyahu to reaffirm America's ironclad commitment to the security of Israel," he said.

Israel demonstrated a remarkable capacity to defend against and defeat even unprecedented attacks - sending a clear message to its foes that they cannot effectively threaten the security of Israel, he said.

"Tomorrow, I will convene my fellow G-7 leaders to

coordinate a united diplomatic response to Iran's brazen attack.

"My team will engage with their counterparts across the region. And we will stay in close touch with Israel's leaders. And while we have not seen attacks on our forces or facilities today, we will remain vigilant to all threats and will not hesitate to take all necessary action to protect our people," Biden said.

In New York, UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres in a statement condemned the serious escalation represented by the large-scale attack launched on Israel by Iran. "I call for an immediate cessation of these hostilities," he said.

"I am deeply alarmed about the very real danger of a devastating region-wide escalation. I urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint to avoid any action that could lead to major military confrontations on multiple fronts in the Middle East," he said.

UN General Assembly Dennis Francis expressed

deep concerns about the unfolding situation in the Middle East, involving the launch by Iran of drones and missiles against Israel.

"The Iranians have explained their action in the context of article 51 of the UN Charter, following the recent Israeli attack on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus. The Iranian response compounds the already tense and delicate peace and security situation in the Middle East," he said and called upon all parties to exercise the utmost restraint to avoid further escalation of tension in the region.

"This is a moment that calls for wise and prudent judgement, in which the risks and extended risks are very carefully considered, he said.

"I expect that the Iranian authorities will honour their word that by their action today, the matter can be deemed concluded. A vicious cycle of attack and counter-attack will lead to nowhere, but inevitably, to more death, suffering and misery. Dialogue and diplomacy are the only way to resolve any differences through peaceful means," Francis said.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau unequivocally condemned Iran's airborne attacks against Israel.

"We stand with Israel. After supporting Hamas' brutal October 7 attack, the Iranian regime's latest actions will further desta-

bilise the region and make lasting peace more difficult," he said.

"These attacks demonstrate yet again the Iranian regime's disregard for peace and stability in the region. We support Israel's right to defend itself and its people from these attacks," Trudeau said.

Meanwhile, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said that American forces remain postured to protect its troops and partners in the region, provide further support for Israel's defence, and enhance regional stability.

"We condemn these reckless and unprecedented attacks by Iran and its proxies, and we call on Iran to immediately halt any further attacks, including from its proxy forces, and to de-escalate tensions. We do not seek conflict with Iran, but we will not hesitate to act to protect our forces and support the defence of Israel," he said.

Austin said he will continue to monitor the situation closely and to consult with US allies and partners.

He also spoke with Israeli Minister of Defence Yoav Gallant to discuss urgent regional threats and reiterated unwavering US support for Israel's defence.

During the call, Austin made clear that Israel could count on full US support to defend Israel against any attacks by Iran and its regional proxies, his spokesperson said on Saturday.