

Sustainability has to be the anchor for development in 21st century: UNGA President Dennis Francis

■ AGENCY

UNITED NATIONS: UN General Assembly President Dennis Francis has said that there is no conflict between promoting sustainability and economic growth and development, underscoring that sustainability has to be the anchor for development in the 21st century. Francis will convene the UN's first-ever 'Sustainability Week' April 15-19 under the theme 'Paving the Way for a Sustainable Future' at the world body's headquarters here. The week will feature dedicated events focused on sustainability in critical sectors such as tourism, infrastructure connectivity, transport, energy and debt.

"The reality is that sustainability has to be the anchor for development in the 21st century. Since we are talking about prioritizing people and the planet, the sustainability dimension of things lies at the very heart of everything we are seeking to do developmentally in the UN," Francis, President of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, told PTI in an exclusive interview here.

"We have identified five key areas or economic sectors that we think have extraordinary potential for really transformative change.... and we know these five sectors have a great

impact on sustainability. They are tourism, transportation, infrastructure, energy and debt" sustainability," Francis said.

He added that these sectors have a huge impact and potential "if we make sensible choices in the way we restructure our behaviours in those sectors, to have an extraordinary impact in effecting the transition towards sustainability."

He highlighted issues such as climate change, energy security concerns, and investments in sustainable infrastructure as well as addressing problems of debt traps that create "further cycles of poverty in which people get left behind or get left out of the system."

"The consequence (of) the debt trap that confronts and confounds many developing countries in the Global South is also a development crisis," because they do not have enough resources to invest in education, housing, national security and poverty alleviation, he said. During the Sustainability Week, Francis will convene a 'High-level thematic debate on debt sustainability and socio-economic equality for all', 'High-level thematic event on 'Tourism', 'High-level meeting on Sustainable Transport', 'Informal dialogue on Building global resilience

and promoting sustainable development through infrastructure connectivity' and 'Global stocktaking marking the completion of the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All to further accelerate the implementation of SDG 7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'.

The UN leader underscored that the high-level week will emphasise "the most important lesson that there is no conflict whatsoever between promoting sustainability and promoting economic growth and development. There is no conflict."

Francis underlined that sustainable living and concepts will create new opportunities and jobs to replace the ones that may be lost, as he cited the example of transitioning from hydrocarbon-based energy to green energy and the resultant creation of new green jobs.

"It is possible to adopt sustainability and yet be profitable and highly productive. That's the key message that we would like countries to take away, to understand that both are achievable. In fact, in the 21st century, not just achievable, it is going to be necessary."

He said living sustainably and promoting sustainability has to become the 'standard in the 21st century to save the planet.'

"The old ways have delivered

us to where we are now where climate change is a major problem," he said.

Francis has said that the goal of the week will be "to unleash progress across the 2030 Agenda towards a more sustainable future - as we also ready ourselves for the Summit of the Future" to be held in September 2024 during the high-level General Assembly session.

As the UN gears to host the ambitious summit in September, Francis said the UNGA Sustainability Week is "something in the way of a down payment as we head into the Summit of the Future."

Francis emphasised that through the Sustainability Week, the intention is to catalyse action towards completion of the Sustainable Development Goals, which he said "have been off track, woefully so."

He emphasised that the UN had given the international community a commitment in 2015 to get the SDGs accomplished by 2030. He however noted that at the time, "no one knew, we could not anticipate that there was going to be a pandemic, we could not anticipate that there were going to be wars, regional wars raging - of which there are many now - we could not anticipate, for exam-

ple, that global food security would become an issue. It has."

"So all of these things have happened at the same time to really dampen and divert attention away from progress towards the SDGs. We now need to get them back on track. And part of what the Summit of the Future will do is just that," he said.

He stressed that the Sustainability Week will give a clarion call to Member States and other stakeholders to recommit not just orally, but through transformative actions "that will usher in this new dawn of sustainable development."

"We have to learn to get accustomed mentally to the new ways of living and doing things in order to ensure that we can continue to live on this planet and that future generations will have the opportunities we do to utilize the extraordinary biodiversity that we have, and can use these natural assets that define the ecosystems in which we live," he said.

"The Sustainable Development Agenda is about lifting people up, giving them hope, and creating opportunities so that they can self-actualise for a better future. And so the Sustainability Week is going to make a contribution to that effort," he said.

US will push China to change policy that threatens American jobs, Treasury Secretary Yellen says

■ AGENCY

BEIJING: The Biden administration will push China to change an industrial policy that poses a threat to US jobs, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on Monday after wrapping up four days of talks with Chinese officials.

She also said in Beijing they had "difficult conversations" about national security, including American concerns that Chinese companies are supporting Russia in its war in Ukraine.

But the focus of her trip was industrial policy, and what the US and Europe describe as manufacturing overcapacity in China.

Wealthy nations fear a wave of low-priced Chinese exports that will overwhelm factories at home.

Yellen cited the manufacturing of electric vehicles and their batteries as well as solar energy equipment - sectors that the US administration is trying to promote domestically - as areas where Chinese government subsidies have driven rapid expansion of production.

"China is now simply too large for the rest of the world to absorb this enormous capacity. Actions taken by the PRC today can shift world prices," she said, using the acronym for China's official



name, the People's Republic of China. "And when the global market is flooded by artificially cheap Chinese products, the viability of American and other foreign firms is put into question."

It's unclear how China will respond to such calls. European officials have repeatedly raised the issue on visits to China with no sign of any change on the Chinese side. Moreover, one of leader Xi Jinping's major goals is to build the nation into a major power so it doesn't feel compelled to bend to outside pressure.

But overcapacity also affects China - price wars in the electric vehicle sector are expected to drive some makers out of business - and experts have called for better coordination of policies designed to promote new technologies. The government agreed during Yellen's visit to start talks on what the two sides called "balanced growth".

"We intend to underscore the

need for a shift in policy by China during these talks," Yellen said at a news conference held outdoors on a balmy spring day at the US ambassador's residence in Beijing.

On Saturday, the official Xinhua News Agency said that the Chinese side had "responded fully to the issue of production capacity" during Yellen's talks with Vice Premier He Lifeng, the lead person for China-US economic and trade affairs.

More than a decade ago, the treasury secretary said, a flood of "below-cost Chinese steel ... decimated industries across the world and in the United States. I've made clear that President Biden and I will not accept that reality again".

On the war in Ukraine, Yellen warned that any banks that facilitate the sale of military or dual-use goods to Russia could face US sanctions.

"I stressed that companies, including those in the PRC, must not provide material support for Russia's war and that they will face significant consequences if they do," she said.

Yellen, the former chair of the US Federal Reserve, met with China's central bank governor, Pan Gongsheng, earlier Monday.

Media freedom has disappeared under BJP rule: CM Vijayan

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

PATHANAMTHITTA (KERALA): Media freedom has disappeared under the BJP rule, with the Sangh Parivar relentlessly targeting those outlets that do not sing praises for the regime, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan alleged on Monday.

He was reacting to news reports that the BBC's Indian newsroom has ceased operations.

The UK-based BBC had recently restructured its operations in India to comply with the country's foreign investment rules.

Addressing the media here, Vijayan said reports claimed that BBC was compelled to make this decision due to persistent vindictive actions by the Income Tax Department.

"Media freedom has disappeared under the BJP rule, with the Sangh Parivar relentlessly targeting media outlets that do not sing praises for the regime. The BBC's ordeal serves as a stark reminder that this election is an opportunity to address and resolve such issues," Vijayan said. He further said authoritarian regimes always try to control the media and the reminis-

cent symptoms of India's Emergency era are resurfacing under BJP rule.

"Their agenda leans towards a compliant media, which is ready to comply without question. Generally, such regimes resort to suppression if the media fails to comply with their demands and threats as seen in the BBC incident," Vijayan claimed. He said since the BJP government came to power in 2014, India's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index has steadily declined.

"According to a 2023 report by the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders, India's press freedom ranking dropped from 150 to 161 out of 180 countries," the senior Left leader said.

He said the nation witnesses the relentless targeting of journalists who dare to report against the Sangh Parivar.

Vijayan also mentioned the 2020 incident in which the licences of two news outlets in Kerala were revoked over the coverage of Delhi riots.

Single phase Lok Sabha elections in Kerala will be held on April 26 and the results will be out on June 4.

entertain the present petition," a bench of Justices B R Gavai and Sandeep Mehta said.

The bench said the high court had already observed in its order that all contentions available to the parties were kept open and the trial judge would not be influenced by any observations made in the order.

The high court had on February 16 dismissed the

pleas by Singh and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal seeking quashing of the summons issued against them in the defamation case.

Kejriwal and Singh had challenged in the high court the summons issued by a trial court in the case filed by the Gujarat University and the subsequent order of the sessions court dismissing their revision applications against the summons.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

HYDERABAD: The ruling Congress, BRS and BJP are leaving no stone unturned to put up an impressive show in the May 13 Lok Sabha polls in Telangana, prompting an intense 3-way fight in the southern state that saw a change of guard last year after a decade.

Congress, fresh from its win in the 2023 Assembly polls, is keen to repeat the good show while BRS that ruled the state for 10 years and now suffering defections, is striving hard to reverse its fortunes. The BJP, energised with its better poll show-- in terms of seats and voteshare in 2023 state elections, is eager to make more electoral inroads.

While the BJP and BRS have already announced their candidates for all the 17 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state, Congress has named its nominees to 14 so far.

The Lok Sabha election is crucial for all the three parties, especially BRS which is facing an existential crisis of sorts following its unexpected defeat in the Assembly elections held in November last year.

The election is also significant for Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy as Congress needs to retain the momentum following its victory in the Assembly polls.

Against the backdrop of its shock defeats in the northern states, Congress looks at Telangana with hope to contribute in significant numbers to its national kitty.

For BJP, Telangana is the only state in the south, after Karnataka, where it sees the possibility to win a good number of seats.

In the aftermath of its unexpected defeat in the Assembly elections, the BRS is now hit by allegations of phone tapping and corruption during the its previous regime. The arrest of party president and former CM K Chandrasekhar Rao's daughter Kavitha in a money-laundering case linked to the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy has only added to its woes.

Four police officers have so far been arrested in connection with phone-tapping case.

The BJP has sought a CBI inquiry into the allegations of phone-tapping.

These factors appear to have an adverse impact on the party's prospects in the parliament polls.

BRS has seen desertion of several senior leaders, including MPs and MLAs, to join either the ruling Congress or BJP in recent months.

Rajya Sabha member K Keshav Rao, who was the party's face in Delhi, his daughter and Hyderabad Mayor Vijaya Laxmi R

Gadwal, former deputy chief minister and MLAs Kadiam Srihari, Danam Nagender, MPs G Ranjit Reddy and BB Patil are some of the BRS leaders who resigned from the party.

In a major embarrassment to Bharat Rashtira Samiti (BRS), Kadiam Kavya, daughter of Srihari, quit after her candidature was announced for Warangal Lok Sabha constituency. She is now the Congress nominee from the same seat.

BRS used to be seen as an invincible force till its loss in the Assembly polls and it is expected to come under intense stress in the event of a poor performance in the parliament election.

The BRS, of late, has been trying to reach out to the voters on the issue of water shortage to agriculture with Chandrasekhar Rao, also known as KCR, undertaking visits to fields where the crops have allegedly withered away.

BRS which is facing a demand from some of its leaders and workers that it should revert to its original name of TRS (Telangana Rashtira Samiti), tries to drive home the message to voters that it is the best bet to safeguard the state's interests.

Senior BRS leader Ravula Chandrasekhar Reddy told

PTI that people remember the performance of the party-

Telangana: Congress seeks to retain momentum, BJP a better show, BRS reversal of electoral fortunes

led government in various sectors, including drinking water, farmers welfare and others and that it will get a positive vote.

BRS had won nine of the 17 Lok Sabha seats in 2019.

Meanwhile, buoyed by its victory in the Assembly elections, Congress is hopeful of winning a majority of seats. It had won three of the 17 Lok Sabha seats in 2019.

Besides the contesting candidates and other senior leaders, several influential leaders like former MLAs have joined Congress in recent months.

Congress held a major rally in the city's outskirts on Saturday which was attended by top party leader Rahul Gandhi. He elaborated on the party's promises for various sections of society in the AICC manifesto released last week. Coupled with the energetic campaign by CM Revanth Reddy, the party's selection of candidates based on caste and other key factors is expected to help the party romp home in the hustings.

Congress sources expressed confidence that the goodwill generated by the implementation of the poll 'guarantees', including free travel for women in state-run RTC buses, free power up to 200 units and LPG cylinders for Rs 500, would help the party.

Meanwhile, BJP is banking on the popularity of Prime

Minister Narendra Modi and the NDA government's achievements and issues like the construction of Ram temple.

Party spokesperson N V Subhash said the BJP was first to announce its candidates who have already started campaigning.

BJP is reaching out to party activists and voters with programmes like Assembly-wise, polling booth-wise meetings, he said.

BJP leaders took part in 'tiffin baidhak' programme of interacting with party activists in polling booths on Saturday on the occasion of the party's foundation day.

The outreach programmes are in addition to the campaign by senior leaders for the Lok Sabha polls, Subhash said.

The saffron party has four MPs in the outgoing House.

Political analyst Ramu Suravajjula felt that the mood is in favour of BJP on the crest of a 'Modi wave' at least in some parts of the state.

The corruption charges, Kavitha's arrest and allegations of phone tapping are having a negative impact on the BRS, he said.

Citing his recent visit in southern Telangana, he said people accorded top priority to internal security and related issues without bothering about party ideologies.

Defamation case: SC dismisses AAP leader Sanjay Singh's plea against Gujarat HC order

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a plea filed by AAP leader Sanjay Singh challenging an order of the Gujarat High Court which refused to quash summons issued against him in a defamation case for alleged comments on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's educational qualification

"We are not inclined to

PM Modi rattled, resorting to 'cliched Hindu-Muslim script': Congress

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Monday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his 'Muslim League imprint' remarks on the party's manifesto, saying he is scared over the prospect of the BJP struggling to cross the 180-seat mark in the Lok Sabha polls and has again resorted to the "same cliched Hindu-Muslim script".

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said that with the BJP's electoral situation worsening day by day, the RSS has started remembering its old friend -- Muslim League. The opposition party's reaction came a day after Prime Minister Modi launched an attack on the Congress, charging that its poll manifesto bore the imprint of the Muslim League and utterances of its leaders showed hostility towards national integrity and Sanatan Dharma.

In a post on X, Kharge said, "The political and ideological ancestors of Modi and Shah supported the British and the Muslim League against the Indians in the freedom movement. Even today, they are invoking the Muslim League against the 'Congress Nyay Patra' which was prepared

with the contributions of common Indians."

The ancestors of Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah opposed the 1942 'Quit India' movement that was called by Mahatma Gandhi and led by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, he said.

"Everyone knows that your ancestors formed their government in Bengal, Sindh and NWFP in the 1940s along with the Muslim League. Didn't Syama Prasad Mookerjee write to the then British Governor about how the Quit India Movement of 1942 by the country and Congress should be suppressed? And for this, he was ready to support the British?" the Congress president said.

"Today Modi-Shah and their nominated president are spreading false rumours about the Congress manifesto. Modi ji's speeches smack of RSS agenda. With the BJP's electoral situation worsening day by day so much, the RSS has started remembering its old friend -- Muslim League!" Kharge said.

He asserted there is only one truth that the Congress' Nyay Patra reflects the hopes and aspirations of 140 crore

people of India. Their combined strength will put an end to Prime Minister Modi's 10 years of injustice, Kharge added.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinate said the BJP is consistently losing ground, which is why "the PM's love for Muslim League has resurfaced".

She said the Congress manifesto is being widely discussed and is a blueprint for the future of the country.

"After being in power for 10 years, when the country is at the brink of elections and the prime minister has to show his report card and ask for votes, he is nervous. He has once again resorted to the same cliched Hindu-Muslim script," she said.

"The manifesto of Congress is the voice of India based on the five pillars of justice. It has an indelible imprint of the people of the country, it has the imprint of the expectations, aspirations and challenges of the crores of people who met us during the connect Bharat Jodo Yatra and Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra," she said.

"It has the imprint of 10 years of broken spirits and

the emergence of a new hope, it has the imprint of youth, it has the imprint of farmers, it has the imprint of women, it has the imprint of workers, it has the imprint of those people who are on the margins of society and we will ensure their participation and greater representation," Shrinate said. The Congress' Nyay Patra has the solution to every problem that the Modi government has imposed on this country over the last 10 years, she said.

"This Nyay Patra is the voice of the people, it is the voice of India," Shrinate said. She claimed that the reality is that Narendra Modi's 'love for Muslim League' is not new.

"These are the same people who stood with the British even during the great struggle for Independence, and who left no opportunity to create communal rift along with the Muslim League. Remember, when in 1942, on the call of Mahatma and during the presidency of Maulana Azad, the country agitated in 'Quit India Movement' and had vowed to do or die, Syama Prasad Mookerjee was not only running his government in Bengal, and his like-minded people in Sindh and NWFP

in collaboration with the Muslim League, but was also writing to the British giving advice on how to suppress this mass movement," she said.

These people have deep affection, admiration and affiliation with the likes of the Muslim League and the British, she alleged.

The reality is that ever since the Congress manifesto was released, there has been panic in the BJP ranks, Shrinate claimed.

"Another big reality is that BJP's tally is dwindling very fast, the latest surveys show they are struggling to cross the 180-seat mark," she claimed.

People also believe that the Congress walks the talk as today in Himachal Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka, where there are Congress governments, many welfare schemes are being run keeping in mind every section of the society, he said.

The Congress has fulfilled every guarantee, Shrinate asserted.

"By stealing the word guarantee, no one will listen to you, Modiji. Today the country is seeking a report on your earlier 'jumlas' - so don't be distracted and get ready to pack your bags," she said.

BJP's 'ideological ancestors' supported British, Muslim League against Indians, says Kharge

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The BJP's "ideological ancestors" supported the British and the Muslim League against Indians in the freedom struggle, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said on Monday as he hit back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his 'Muslim League imprint' remarks on the party's manifesto.

Modi had earlier attacked the Congress, charging that its poll manifesto bore the imprint of the Muslim League and utterances of its leaders showed hostility towards national integrity and Sanatan Dharma.

In a post on X, Kharge said, "Modi-Shah's political and ideological ancestors supported the British and the Muslim League against the Indians in the freedom struggle."

"Even today, they are invoking the Muslim League against the 'Congress Nyay Patra', guided and shaped according to the aspirations, needs and demands of common Indians," he added.

BJP chief JP Nadda had also accused the Congress of appeasement in its manifesto and asked the party to



explain why it was against the majority. In his post, Kharge alleged, "Modi-Shah's ideological ancestors opposed Mahatma Gandhi's call for 'Quit India' in 1942, which was the movement chaired by Maulana Azad."

Everyone knows how Syama Prasad Mukherjee formed his governments in Bengal, Sindh and the North-West Frontier Province in the 1940s in coalition with the Muslim League, the Congress chief said.

"Did Shyama Prasad Mukherjee not write to the then British governor about how the Quit India movement of 1942 can be 'combated' and how the Congress should be suppressed? And for this, he said that 'Indians have to trust the British?'," Kharge asked.

"Modi-Shah and their nom-

inated president are today spreading falsehood about the Congress manifesto," he alleged.

"There is a stink of RSS in Modi ji's speeches, the BJP's electoral graph is plunging day by day, therefore the RSS has started remembering its best friend -- the Muslim League!," Kharge said.

"There is only one truth -- the Congress' Nyay Patra reflects the hopes and aspirations of 140 crore people of India. Their combined strength will put an end to Modi ji's 10 years of injustice," he claimed.

Earlier in the day, the Congress said Modi is scared over the prospect of the BJP struggling to cross the 180-seat mark in the Lok Sabha polls and again resorted to the "same cliched Hindu-Muslim script".