

# INDIA govt will create crores of 'lakhpatists', conduct caste census and 'economic' survey: Rahul Gandhi

Amravati (Maharashtra), Apr 24: Congress MP Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday claimed that ten years of Narendra Modi government saw only 22-25 persons becoming billionaires on the back of a Rs 16 lakh crore loan waiver, but if the INDIA alliance comes to power, it will make crores of people "lakhpatists".

Addressing a rally in Maharashtra's Amravati district, Gandhi also said no force in the world can change the Constitution of India.



Rs 1 lakh in their bank accounts, will change the face of the country and make crores of "lakhpatists", Gandhi said.

After the end of the one-year apprenticeship, India will have a trained and skilled workforce, he said.

The Wayanad MP claimed the BJP wanted to change the Constitution because it did not want 90 per cent of the population, which comprises the backwards, adivasis (tribals), Dalits and minorities, to know their real potential.

Describing the Constitution as the "voice" of the poor, he said, "No force in the world can change the Constitution, wonder what gave the BJP confidence to even think of doing so." "The Constitution is not just a book, but a weapon of the poor. 22-25 persons were helping Modi to destroy it and whenever I talk about this, Modi diverts the issue with Pakistan and China narrative," he alleged.

The poor, Dalits, backwards, minorities, poor from the general category, adivasis comprise 90 per cent of the population and they do not have a represen-

tation in the corporate, government and media fields, Gandhi said.

"There are 15 per cent Dalits, 8 per cent adivasis, 50 per cent OBCs, 15 per cent minorities, five per cent poor from the general category. Since they do not have a representation, issues related to them are not highlighted as they should be," he said.

The Congress leader said the right to apprenticeship will create a trained workforce in a year besides providing Rs 1 lakh in their bank accounts.

A commission will be set up to take a call on when the farmers' crop loans need to be waived, he said.

The INDIA alliance government will waive farmers' loans, Gandhi said.

"There is no dearth of money in the country. If loans of the rich are waived, the same rule should apply to farmers and the poor, I am only asking for justice," he said. Targeting the BJP, Gandhi alleged it was happening for the first time in the history that a political party is trying to finish the Constitution.

"The INDI alliance is

working towards saving the Constitution whereas Modi, BJP, and RSS are working towards finishing the Constitution and democracy," he said.

"I want to give the message to Maharashtra and the entire country that no force in the world can change our Constitution," the Congress leader added.

"Modi only helped his 22 industrialist friends and did nothing for the common people. He implemented the note ban and brought farm laws and GST. How much loan of the poor, students and farmers has he waived while granting a Rs 16 lakh crore loan waiver to his 22 industrialist friends," Gandhi said.

He said if voted to power, the Congress would double the income of Aasha and Aanganwadi workers and grant 50 per cent reservation to women in government and public sector jobs.

"Our government will waive farm loans and will set up a farmers commission which will waive loans when the need arises," the Congress leader said.

He alleged that the Modi government didn't invite President Droupadi Murmu for the consecration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya and the inauguration new Parliament building.

He said tribals are not "vanvasis" but "adivasis", "who are the first owners of Hindustan".

"Our government will conduct a caste-based Census and the economic survey which will be a revolutionary step in the national interest," Gandhi said.

# ECIL, BEL refuse to disclose names of manufacturers of EVM, VVPAT components under RTI Act

**NEW DELHI, APR 24:** Electronics Corporation of India Ltd and Bharat Electronics Ltd have refused to disclose the names and contact details of the manufacturers and suppliers of various components of EVMs and VVPATs under the RTI Act citing "commercial confidence", according to RTI responses from the PSUs to an activist.

Activist Venkatesh Nayak had filed two identical Right To Information applications with the ECIL and BEL, seeking the details of the manufacturers and suppliers of various components used in the assembling of the electronic voting machines (EVMs) and voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPATs). The VVPAT is an independent vote verification system which enables electors to see whether their votes have been cast correctly.

The ECIL and the BEL, public sector undertakings under the Ministry of Defence, manufacture EVMs and VVPATs for the Election Commission.

Nayak also sought a copy of the purchase orders for the components from both PSUs.



"Information sought is in commercial confidence. Hence details cannot be provided under Section 8(1)(d) of the RTI Act," BEL said in its response.

A similar response was sent by ECIL which said the details requested are related to a product which is being manufactured by ECIL, and third party in nature.

"Disclosing of details will affect the Competitive position of ECIL. Hence, Exemption is claimed under section 8(1)(d) of RTI ACT, 2005," it said.

In response to the purchase order copies, ECIL's central public information officer said the information is "voluminous" which would disproportionately divert the resources of the

Public Authority.

"Further, the information will give away the design details of EVM components. The same may pose a danger to the machines produced. Hence, the exemption is claimed U/s 7(9) and under section 8(1)(d) of RTI Act, 2005," ECIL said.

Section 8(1)(d) of the RTI Act exempts from disclosure the information, including commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual property, the disclosure of which would harm the competitive position of a third party, unless the competent authority is satisfied that larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information.

Section 7(9) of the Act says the information shall

ordinarily be provided in the form in which it is sought unless it would disproportionately divert the resources of the public authority or would be detrimental to the safety or preservation of the record in question.

"I don't know whose interests they are trying to protect against the right to know of close to a billion-strong electorate. ECIL said that disclosure of the purchase orders will reveal the design details of the components and this may pose a danger to the machines produced. ECIL did not upload even a signed copy of its reply on the RTI Online Portal," Nayak said.

He said it is reasonable to infer that the two companies are not manufacturing every single item of the EVM-VVPAT combo or else the two companies would have replied that they are manufacturing all these components internally without any outsourcing being involved.

"But the electorate is expected to take everything about the voting machines based on what the ECI is claiming in its manuals and FAQs," Nayak said.

# Congress pampered terrorists: Yogi Adityanath ups BJP's communal polarisation pitch

**LUCKNOW, APR 24:** Uttar Pradesh chief minister Adityanath on Tuesday sharpened the communal polarisation pitch by accusing the Congress of promoting terrorism and the Samajwadi Party of letting off the terrorists who had attacked temples in Ayodhya and Varanasi.

"The Congress pampered the terrorists and closed its eyes when the country faced attacks. The SP supported the criminals in Uttar Pradesh and destroyed law and order here.... They also withdrew cases against the terrorists who had attacked Ayodhya and Kashi (Varanasi) temples," Adityanath said at a rally in Amroha.

Five Lashkar-e-Toiba terrorists had attacked the



makeshift Ram temple in Ayodhya in 2005 when Mulyam Singh Yadav was the chief minister. Security forces on duty had liquidated the attackers on the spot.

A blast had taken place at Sheetal Ghat in Varanasi in 2010 and five persons were arrested in connection with it. The Indian Mu-

jahideen had taken responsibility for the attack in which a girl was killed and 20 persons sustained injuries. Akhilesh Yadav was the chief minister at that time. The case is still sub-judice and the accused are in jail.

Escalating his attack, Adityanath referred to a comment by former Prime

Minister Manmohan Singh in 2006 that "Muslims should have the first right over the land of the country".

Reacting to a similar remark made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a rally in Rajasthan, the Congress said Modi was resorting to "lies" and "hate speech" to divert people from the real issues after facing "disappointment" in the first phase of Lok Sabha polls.

Later, Adityanath took out a road show from Purani Delhi Chungi to Lal Bazar Chauraha in the adjoining Meerut parliamentary constituency. Sources in the state government said there were around 4,000 police personnel deployed around the chief minister.

# Excise scam: Delhi court directs CBI to file documents detailing statements of accused, evidence

**NEW DELHI, APR 24:** A Delhi court on Wednesday asked the CBI to file documents, including a table detailing the statements of witnesses and accused as well as the evidence, in the corruption case related to the alleged excise policy scam by May

7. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja issued the directions to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) while adjourning the hearing on whether to frame charges against the accused persons in the case.

On April 22, the court had

reserved for May 2 its order on the bail application of BRS leader K Kavitha, who is currently in judicial custody, in the case.

She was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on March 15 from her Banjara Hills residence in Hyderabad in a money

laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam. She was arrested by the CBI from Tihar jail on April 11.

The CBI is probing alleged corruption in the formulation and execution of the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy 2021-22.

# Samajwadi Party changes mind, now Akhilesh Yadav to contest from Uttar Pradesh's Kannauj

**LUCKNOW, APR 24:** Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav will contest the Lok Sabha elections from Kannauj, the party announced on Wednesday, two days after it had declared another candidate for the Uttar Pradesh seat.

The party said Akhilesh Yadav will now file his papers on Thursday, when nominations begin.

"National president Akhilesh Yadav will file his nomination papers from the Kannauj Lok Sabha seat at 12 pm tomorrow as Samajwadi Party candidate," the party posted in Hindi on X in the evening.

On Monday, the SP had declared his nephew Tej



Pratap Yadav as its candidate from the Kannauj parliamentary seat.

Earlier in the day, when reporters asked Akhilesh about his plans, he said, "It will be clear before the nominations." "Maybe you will get to know before nominations," he said, answering further questions.

When asked whether

party workers in Kannauj wanted him to contest from the seat, Yadav said, "The question here is of historic victory from the seat. The BJP will become history in this election as people have made up their mind for INDIA bloc. People are going to vote against the NDA.

"PDA will defeat the NDA this time," he said. PDA

stands for pichde (backwards), Dalits and alpsankhyak (minorities).

Tej Pratap was the SP MP from Mainpuri between 2014-2019. He is also the son-in-law of RJD president Lalu Prasad Yadav.

Akhilesh had won the Kannauj parliamentary seat first in 2000 and later represented it in 2004 and 2009. He vacated the seat after he became the Uttar Pradesh chief minister in 2012, and his wife Dimple Yadav won the by-election unopposed.

Dimple also won in 2014 but lost the seat to BJP's Subrat Pathak in 2019.

Akhilesh, an MLA from the Karhal assembly seat in Mainpuri, is the Leader of Opposition in the UP assembly.

# Amid Rahul Gandhi suspense, posters supporting Robert Vadra surface in Amethi

As suspense continues on whether Congress leader Rahul Gandhi would fight the Lok Sabha elections from Amethi, posters supporting his brother-in-law Robert Vadra's candidature have surfaced in the constituency that was once regarded as a Gandhi family bastion.

On Tuesday night, posters in support of Vadra, the husband of Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi, were seen at many places, including the Amethi Congress office, with the slogan "Amethi Ki Janata Kare Pukar, Robert Vadra Abki Baar".

Roughly translated, it says the people of Amethi want Robert Vadra this time.



While the local unit of the Congress blamed its opponents for putting up the posters to create confusion, the district administration has started removing them.

It is yet to declare its candidature for the Amethi seat and there is still doubt over Rahul Gandhi's candidature from the parliamentary constituency. Vadra has recently

thrown hints that he is keen to contest the Lok Sabha election from Amethi. He told reporters in Mathura earlier this month that the people of Amethi want him to represent them.

"They want me to represent them, go to their area and listen to their problems so that they can progress. I am also interested in joining politics..." he had said then.

# Nearly 50 per cent Gen Z Indians ready for their first independent abroad trip: Survey

New Delhi, Apr 24: Almost 50 per cent of Gen Z in India are planning for their first independent international trip, reveals a new survey, with over 80 per cent of them choosing to embark only after cashing in their first paycheck.

The survey, conducted by the global travel marketplace Skyscanner, said while two in three young Indians are diligently saving, only one in five utilise buy-now-pay-later options to make their travel dreams a reality sooner.

"There is a strong desire for travel among India's Gen Z (aged 18-25). Nearly half (47 per cent) of them are eagerly planning leisure trips abroad, without their parents or guardians, fueled by their deep desire for exploration

and new adventures (49 per cent)," said the report.

Interestingly, according to the report, titled "First Trip with Skyscanner", financial independence is key to Gen Z, with a whopping 81 per cent choosing to plan their first overseas adventure after landing their first job or receiving their first paycheck.

The results also shed light on the travel behaviours and factors considered by Gen Z in India as they chart their course for their first independent trip without their parents or guardians.

So, with 46 per cent inspired to



jet off overseas to experience concerts, sports events, and other big cultural events, and 51 per cent seeing travel as a chance to break free and immerse in new cultures,

for most Gen Zs it is all about "expanding horizons".

"Gen Zs in India are passionate about exploration! Whether it is their desire to seize the opportu-

nity of semester breaks and long weekends to fuel their wanderlust (42 per cent), or celebrate special milestones like birthdays, anniversaries, or graduations (39 per cent), their passion for travel is undeniable," said Mohit Joshi, travel and destinations expert of Skyscanner, in a statement.

The Gen Z travellers, as per the report, embarking on their first trip abroad would also like to plan every detail down to a tee.

"Almost 3 in 4 Gen Z prefer having their itineraries (76 per cent) and return tickets (73 per cent) booked when planning their first trip. This generation is also budget-conscious, with over half (51 per cent) prioritising finding affordable flights and accommodation for their first overseas trip," it added.

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