

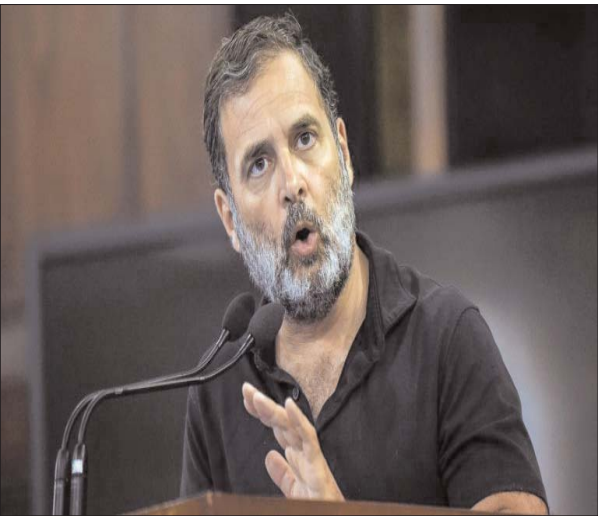
Witnessing Betrayal Of Indian Farmers In Name Of US Trade Deal: Rahul Gandhi

NEW DELHI, FEB 15: Upping the ante against the government over the India-US interim trade deal, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday posed a string of questions to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and alleged that “we are witnessing a betrayal” of Indian farmers.

Gandhi, who has been attacking the government and accusing it of a sell-out through the deal, said this issue concerns the future and asked whether India is allowing another country to gain a long-term hold over India’s agriculture industry.

“In the name of a US trade deal, we are witnessing a betrayal of Indian farmers,” the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said in his post in Hindi on X.

Posing questions to the prime minister, Gandhi asked what it means to import Dried Distillers’ Grains (DDG). “Does it mean that Indian cattle will be fed distillers’ grains made from GM American corn? Won’t this effectively make our milk products dependent on the US agricultural industry?” he questioned.



Gandhi further inquired that if India allows the import of GM soy oil, what would its implications be on soy farmers in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and across the country? “How will they withstand another price shock?” he asked.

“When you say ‘additional products’, what does that include? Does this indicate pressure to open pulses and other crops to US imports over time?” he questioned.

He also asked, “What does it mean to remove ‘non-trade

barriers’? Will India be pressured in the future to loosen its stance on GM crops, weaken procurement, or reduce MSPs and bonuses?” Gandhi expressed concern that once the door is opened, it may be difficult to keep it from opening wider each year. “Will it be prevented, or will more crops gradually be put on the table each time?” Gandhi said, adding that farmers must receive this clarity. “This isn’t just about today. It’s about the future too — are we allowing another country to gain a long-

term hold on India’s agriculture industry?” he stressed.

On Saturday, Gandhi accused the government of cheating cotton farmers and textile exporters in the country over the India-US interim trade deal, noting that the agreement could cause significant harm to both sectors.

He had also claimed that the trade deal, which now favours Bangladesh through zero per cent tariffs, will either finish the textile sector, the cotton farming or both, adding that the nation is aware of this.

In a post on X, Gandhi criticised the government for failing to protect the interests of cotton farmers and textile exporters. He argued that a visionary government would have negotiated a deal that safeguarded both sectors and ensured their prosperity.

“18 per cent Tariff vs 0 per cent — Let me explain how the prime minister and his cabinet are spreading confusion on this issue. And how they are cheating India’s cotton farmers and textile exporters through the India-US trade deal,” he had said in his post. (Agencies)

India A Global Centre Of Goodwill, Social Harmony: RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat

GORAKHPUR (UP), FEB 15: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Sunday that India stands as a global centre of goodwill and social harmony, asserting that the country’s civilisational ethos is rooted in a sense of oneness and mutual belonging rather than transactional relationships.

Addressing a ‘Samajik Sadbhav’ (social harmony) meeting organised by the RSS Goraksh province at Baba Gambhirnath Auditorium in Taramandal here to mark the organisation’s centenary year, Bhagwat said society is defined by interconnectedness and not by self-interest.

“In many countries, relationships are seen as transactions. In our country, human relationships are based on a sense of belonging,” he



said.

“India stands as a global centre of goodwill and social harmony. The country’s civilisational ethos is rooted in a sense of oneness and mutual belonging rather than transactional relationships,” he said.

Highlighting India’s diversity, Bhagwat said differ-

ences in customs, attire and traditions do not create divisions because of the underlying cultural unity.

“We consider Bharat as our mother. The same divine consciousness resides in everyone. That bond keeps us united despite our distinct identities,” he said.

He added that social har-

mony, not merely law enforcement, sustains society. Referring to the RSS completing 100 years, Bhagwat said the milestone was not a matter of celebration but introspection.

He called for block-level meetings two to three times a year to strengthen social cohesion and urged communities to work for the larger Hindu society beyond caste concerns. “Society must act on its own. The Sangh will assist, but responsibility lies with society,” he said, adding that India has always extended help to other nations in times of crisis without selfish motives.

Representatives from various communities shared their views during the meeting. Bhagwat later joined them for a community meal. (Agencies)

‘Unprecedented stagnation’: CISF inspectors seek due promotion on back of SC cadre review order

NEW DELHI, FEB 15: A group of over 500 CISF inspectors has petitioned the paramilitary force seeking a “fair” cadre review to ensure time-bound promotions, as they are experiencing “unprecedented” stagnation, given they receive only one post upgrade over a span of 30 to 34 years in their careers.

PTI has seen multiple communications sent by these officials to their headquarters, citing a favourable order of the Supreme Court issued on February 2, which disposed of their special leave petition (SLP) and directed that the cadre review for the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) be completed within three months.

Inspectors in the CISF are initially recruited as sub-inspectors (SIs). The next promotion level is inspector, fol-

lowed by assistant commandant (AC), which is the entry-level gazetted officer rank. Currently, there are around 3,000 inspectors and approximately 17,000 SIs in the force.

The petitioners said the stagnation was at the inspector level to the AC rank.

The inspectors stated they have been facing “extraordinary, severe, and unprecedented stagnation,” with many retiring after more than three decades of “unblemished” service, having received only one promotion (to inspector).

The officials argued that this stagnation is causing them “grave prejudice, loss of morale, and a violation of their fundamental rights.” When contacted, a senior CISF officer said the cadre review for the Group ‘A’ service officers was “ongoing”, and

the exercise would be conducted “fairly”, keeping in mind all sections of the staff. The inspectors attributed the “acute” stagnation in their ranks to “systematic” reduction in promotion quota, “anomaly” in rank status compared to other CAPFs and non-compliance with Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) guidelines on cadre management. As subordinate officers, the inspectors have insisted that, as the “feeder cadre” for Group ‘A’ posts (gazetted officer rank), they are “directly affected” by the cadre review of this service, and therefore, their concerns should be addressed during this process.

They have also sought “parity” with other CAPFs like CRPF, BSF, ITBP and SSB, claiming that while similarly recruited SIs in these forces have risen to higher

gazetted officer ranks, they continue to stagnate despite having entered service through the same combined SSC examination.

“It has been a long battle for us. The Supreme Court has found merit in our pleas and has found that we are stagnating in our careers due to a lack of due promotions. We hope to be treated fairly this time and hence have urged our force headquarters to do justice,” said an inspector with 32 years of service.

The CISF, which has approximately 2 lakh personnel, is a Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) under the Union Home Ministry, responsible for guarding vital infrastructure in sectors such as power, nuclear power, and aerospace, as well as providing counter-terrorism cover for Parliament and major civil airports. (Agencies)

Nehru’s message to Cong MPs during 1954 LS Speaker removal debate: ‘Not bound by whip’

NEW DELHI, FEB 15: India’s first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s message to Congress MPs during the debate in 1954 on the Opposition’s resolution to remove then Speaker G V Mavalankar was that they are not bound by any whip or direction, as he urged all legislators to consider the matter “regardless of party affiliations”.

He had urged Lok Sabha MPs to look at the issue not through the lens of the party but as a matter concerning the dignity of the House.

With the spotlight on the Opposition’s notice to move a resolution for the removal of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, the three occasions when such situations had arisen in the past are also in focus.

The first such situation surfaced on December 18, 1954, when the Opposition moved a resolution for the removal of then Speaker Mavalankar. It was admitted after over 50 members stood up in support, and a debate took place over it.

Nehru had also urged the chair to give more time to the Opposition in the debate.

It was a fiery debate during which the Opposition, though weak in numbers, tore into Nehru and accused the speaker of being partisan.

Intervening in the debate, Nehru said, “I would like to address the House, if I may, in my capacity and the high privilege of being the Leader of this House and not as a leader of the majority party. So far as this majority party is concerned, I would like to tell them that not one of them is bound by any whip or any direction: let them vote as they like. It is not a party matter. It is a matter for this House, for each individual, to consider, regardless of party affiliations.” “Therefore, let us try to think of it not as a party issue but as members of this House, because this matter affects the hon. speaker, of course, but it affects the high



dignity of this House as Parliament, it affects the first citizen of this country, that is, the speaker of this House,” he said.

It is a serious matter when the honour of Parliament is concerned, Nehru said.

What is said about the speaker, what is done about the speaker comes back on each one of us who claim to be members of this House, the then PM said.

“I wish members to realise this because I have felt sad and very sad ever since this matter came up before the House. We have known the speaker for many years and we have seen him function and it is possible that some of us may not have exactly the same opinion about him as others have; it is possible,” he said.

“It has so happened that some of us have not particularly liked a decision of his or a ruling of his. It is one thing not to like a ruling or to disagree with it or even to feel, if I may say so, slightly irritated about something that has happened. These things happen. But, it is completely a different thing to challenge the bona fides of the very person in whose keeping is the honour of this House,” Nehru had said.

“When we challenge his bona fides, we betray before our countrymen and indeed before the world that we are little men and that is the seriousness of the situation. It is for you to decide because we are displaying to the world

and to our country that we are little, quarrelsome men who indulge in frivolity, who indulge in accusation without thinking what that means and without thinking what the consequences of it might be,” he had said.

“I do not say that it is not possible at all to raise a motion against the Speaker. Of course, the Constitution has provided it. Nobody challenges the right of the Opposition or any Member of the House to put forward this motion. I do not deny that right since it has been given by the Constitution. The point is not the legal right but the propriety; the desirability of doing it,” he said.

Responding to examples given by the Opposition, Nehru said, “Mr. (S S) More in his soft and gentle voice, which often contains many bitter things, went on and told us of what happened to the head of a king in England in the 17th century. He told us of the practice of the British House of Commons 200 years ago and all that. I listened with amazement. Here was a serious matter, here we are in the middle of the 20th century, in the Republic of India, and we are told about what happened in the Middle Ages or some other time in England.” “It is true that we follow to a considerable extent the practices of the British Parliament, but it is also true that even the practices of the British Parliament are not governed today by what happened in the 17th

century there,” he said.

“But apart from that, we are not concerned with what happened in the British Parliament. We are concerned with the honour of our Parliament, we are concerned with the honour of the person who holds up the dignity and the prestige of this Parliament,” he said.

“I listened to a number of speeches delivered from the opposite side. It was an exhibition of incompetence, frivolity and lack of substance,” he said.

Nehru then went on to strongly defend the speaker and hit out at the Opposition for questioning his bona fides.

The Congress had a brute majority with over 360 members, and the resolution was negated by a voice vote.

In 1966, a resolution against Speaker Sardar Hukam Singh failed to move forward after it could not secure the mandatory support of 50 members required for initiation.

On April 15, 1987, the Opposition moved a resolution for the removal of then Speaker Balram Jakhar.

Intervening in the debate, Rajiv Gandhi quoted Nehru’s remarks twice from the 1954 resolution debate and slammed the Opposition for questioning the bona fides of the speaker. The resolution was defeated by a voice vote.

In December 2024, the Opposition submitted a notice in the Rajya Sabha seeking the removal of then Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar as chairman of the upper house, alleging partisan conduct. However, it was rejected at the preliminary stage on procedural grounds.

A notice to bring the resolution for the removal of Birla was submitted by Opposition members last Tuesday.

The notice will be listed after the start of the second phase of the Budget session from March 9. Sources have said a speedy review will be conducted as per the rules.

along with boatmen and divers.

Verma said that adequate changing rooms are available at all the ghats, and the fair area is being monitored through CCTV cameras and drones. (Agencies)

5 European nations say Russian opposition leader Navalny was poisoned and blame Kremlin

LONDON, FEB 15: Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was poisoned with a lethal toxin from the skin of dart frogs, five European countries said Saturday, blaming the Russian state for the attack.

The foreign ministries of the UK, France, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands said analysis of samples from Navalny, who died two years ago, “have conclusively confirmed the presence of epibatidine.” It is a toxin found in poison dart frogs in South America that is not found naturally in Russia, they said.

The countries said in a joint statement that “Russia had the means, motive and opportunity to administer this poison.” They said they were reporting Russia to the Organisation for the Prohi-



bition of Chemical Weapons for a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said “Russia saw Navalny as a threat. By using this form of poison the Russian state demonstrated the despicable tools it has at its disposal and the overwhelming fear it has of polit-

ical opposition.” Navalny, who crusaded against official corruption and staged massive anti-Kremlin protests as President Vladimir Putin’s fiercest foe, died in the Arctic penal colony in February 2024. He was serving a 19-year sentence that he believed to be politically motivated. Navalny’s widow,

Yulia Navalnaya, said last year that two independent labs had found that her husband was poisoned shortly before he died. Navalnaya has repeatedly blamed Putin for Navalny’s death, something Russian officials have vehemently denied.

Russian authorities said that the politician became ill after a walk and died from natural causes.

In 2020, Navalny was poisoned with a nerve agent attack he blamed on the Kremlin, which always denied involvement. His family and allies fought to have him flown to Germany for treatment and recovery. Five months later, he returned to Russia, where he was immediately arrested and imprisoned for the last three years of his life. (AP)

Jaishankar reiterates India’s support for UNSC reform during meeting with G7 counterparts in Germany

MUNICH, FEB 15: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar today met his counterparts from the G7 countries as he reiterated India’s support for reform of the UN Security Council (UNSC) at the Munich Security Conference.

The meeting comes after India concluded a free trade agreement (FTA) with the 27-nation European Union in January.

Jaishankar in a social media post said he was pleased to engage with G7 Foreign Ministers and reiterated India’s support of the UN@80 agenda, particularly meaningful reform of the UN Se-

curity Council.

The external affairs minister said he emphasised India’s role in “safeguarding sea lines of communication, serving as a first responder, strengthening port security, and contributing to resilient submarine cable infrastructure”.

“Our conversation brought out the many convergences and shared interests between India and the G7,” the minister added.

Jaishankar started his Munich Security Conference with a roundtable ‘Delhi Decided: Mapping India’s Policy Calculus’, organised by the Ananta Aspen Centre, a

non-partisan organisation.

The external affairs minister said he highlighted the “importance of a nimble and dynamic foreign policy to meet the demands of multipolarity”. In a discussion with Indrani Bagchi, CEO Ananta Centre, Jaishankar said he also noted the significance of the India-EU FTA and the India-US trade deal in that regard. “The discussion looked at India’s growth strategy, the choices before key partners, and why strategic autonomy remains a steady anchor as global dynamics evolve,” the Ananta Centre said.

India and the 27-nation

bloc on January 27 announced the conclusion of negotiations for the free trade agreement.

The free trade agreement that will account for almost a quarter of the global GDP will reduce tariffs on 99 per cent of Indian exports to the EU and cut duties on over 97 per cent of the EU’s exports to India, according to officials.

The UN@80 initiative was launched by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in March 2025. This initiative focuses on improving organisational efficiency, reviewing mandate implementation.

21 Lakh Devotees Take Holy Dip In Ganga, Sangam On Magh Mela’s Last Day

PRAYAGRAJ (UP), FEB 15: On the occasion of Mahashivratri, the last bathing day of the ongoing Magh Mela, 21 lakh devotees have taken a holy dip in the Ganga and Sangam by 10 am, an official said on

Sunday.

A mela authority official said that devotees have been arriving at the fair area and bathing since late Saturday night. By 10 am on Sunday, 21 lakh devotees have bathed in the Ganga

and Sangam, the official said.

District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma said that adequate security arrangements have been made at all the ghats. SDRF and NDRF teams are deployed,