

National and International News

Gandhi brand no longer sells in Indian politics

New Delhi, Aug. 6: India's Congress party and its controlling Nehru-Gandhi dynasty that has been synonymous with political power for most of the 70 years since independence, hit a new low with this weekend's vice-presidential election. The Congress-backed candidate was crushed in Saturday's parliamentary ballot by the nominee of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his ruling nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The victory means the BJP occupy the top three offices of state for the first time, following its victory in last month's presidential ballot.

It heightened a crisis for Congress and raised fresh questions about the party's top leadership — especially 47-year-old Rahul Gandhi, great grandson of India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Gandhi led the campaign in the disastrous 2014 general election which saw Congress win just 44 seats — an historic low. The party went on to defeat-after-defeat in state elections.

"The Congress faces two existential crises — lack of leadership and the absence of an aspirational, coherent vision for the future," Milan Vaishnav, South Asia director at Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace think-tank, told AFP.

"What is stunning is that the 2014 general election result exposed both of these infirmities, yet the party has made little to no progress remedying them. If current trends continue, the Congress risks terminal decline," Vaishnav added.

While still short of an outright majority, the BJP last week snatched Congress' mantle as the largest party in the upper house, the Rajya Sabha, after almost six decades.

A favourable vice-president could also bolster Modi's legislative agenda as the vice president doubles as chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

The centre-left Congress has ruled India for more than 50 of the past 70 years, most of them with Nehru and his descendants at the helm.

Since Nehru, his daughter Indira Gandhi and grandson Rajiv Gandhi have been prime minister.

But the so-called 'natural-born leaders' have looked like political outsiders since the 2014 electoral

drubbing. Party number two to his Italian-born mother Sonia Gandhi, 70 — widow of the assassinated Rajiv — Rahul has suffered a string of key local election defeats including in the bellwether state of Uttar Pradesh in March.

"Today, unlike the past, the family needs the party more than the party needs the family," R. Jagannathan, a Mumbai-based political commentator and editorial director of Swarajya, told AFP.

"I think that Gandhi name is past its sell-by date. His mother at least had AN interest (in politics), Rahul doesn't seem interested... he is unsuitable for leadership," Jagannathan added.

Rahul Gandhi made an unsuccessful attempt to mediate between regional allies in a dispute that led to Bihar state falling to the BJP last month, and the loyalty he commands within the party is open to doubt.

Jagannathan suggested the once-dominant family should make way for "real grassroots leaders," but Sadanand Dhume of the Washington-based American Enterprise Institute, said a change in leadership would be problematic.

"In theory it makes sense to suggest that Congress should outgrow its reliance on the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. In reality, the family is all that holds the party together. Take it out and Congress collapses like a proverbial house of cards," Dhume said.

Rahul's younger sister Priyanka, who many see as an alternative leader, is hampered by a controversy over her husband's property dealings, and has so far refused to take a more prominent role.

With the opposition in disarray, the BJP and its allies now rule 18 of India's 29 states, and look set for more gains in the upper house.

"The Rajya Sabha is effectively the only real political check on Modi's power. Once the BJP gains control, Modi will be free to pursue an expansive legislative agenda on a range of issues," Dhume said.

In the current opposition vacuum, even one-time Modi challengers like Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar now say Modi's victory in the 2019 national election is a foregone conclusion.

Bangladeshi Terror Suspect Arrested From Muzaffarnagar

Lucknow, Aug. 6: A Bangladeshi national, who investigators say was recruiting young men from terror activities and providing them with logistical support, was arrested today from Muzaffarnagar in western Uttar Pradesh. The man, identified as Abdullah, is suspected

to be linked to the Ansarulaha Bangla Team — a Bangladesh-based extremist group inspired by the Al Qaeda.

Sources in the Anti-Terror Squad, which made the arrest, said Abdullah had been living in Uttar Pradesh since 2011. Initially, he lived in Deoband.

Quit India Movement

By: Aadiya Tiwari

The year was 1942. Monsoon winds from the Indian Ocean had already arrived. With them the news of vigorous naval battles also came. World had become bipolar, India too was on the boil, waiting to unshackle the chains of age old slavery. At this juncture Sir Stafford Cripps came with an offer of dominion status in return of India's support for the war. The British offered allegiance to Queen in lieu of self-rule but did not realize the likes of Bhagat Singh & Chandra Shekhar Azad hadn't sacrificed their lives for dominion status. Demand of freedom fighters across the country was unanimous and it was for 'Poorna Swaraj', total independence. Therefore, on the eve of 8th August, 1942 Gandhi ji gave a clarion call to the nation. He said, "Here is a mantra, a short one that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is: 'Karo ya Maro', 'Do or Die'."

Quit India Movement was launched at a time when the world was in a flux. There was an ongoing war in the West and in the East, movements against the Colonialism had intensified. India on one hand was looking at the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi who wanted to transform the society by non-violent means and Satyagraha. On the other hand was the 'Tiger of Bengal', Subhash Chandra Bose

who had given the slogan 'Dilli Chalo' and was marching with an Army to free India. The breeding ground of India's independence movement had had enough manure of mass movements and was fertile now to plant seeds of freedom. All big leaders were arrested within twenty four hours after the movement was announced, there was no one to guide, but still the movement propped up leaders from across the strata of society. Large protests and demonstrations were held all over the country. People demonstrated against symbols of British government, they put up Congress flag on government buildings. People offered arrests and disrupted day to day workings, students and workers went on strike, peasants in Bengal fought against the rise in taxes and government officials broke laws. It was a historic event. It was not merely a movement against foreign occupation but also awakening of Indian masses. The history of this movement is full of unsung heroes. There are untold stories of farmers, factory workers, journalists, artists, students, educationists, religious saints and dalits.

The movement saw rise of leaders like, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Jai Prakash Narayan and Aruna Asaf Ali. Parallel governments were formed in many parts of the country. Chittu Pandey formed a government in Balia while YB Chavan and Nana Patil in Satara. Quit India movement

was unique in the sense that it saw women participation where they not only participated as equals but also led the movement. There was Matangini Hazra, who led a procession of 6,000 people, mostly women, to ransack a local police station. She lost her life to police bullets and died with the Tricolour in her hands. Then there was Sucheta Kripalani who later went on to become first women Chief Minister of India. Orissa had Nandini Devi and Sashibala Devi while Assam saw participation of young girls like Kanaklata Baruah and Kahuli Devi who died of police atrocities. Contribution of Usha Mehta was unique as she started a Secret Congress Radio in Mumbai. In the city of Patna there is a life-size sculpture of young school going boys clad in dhoti kurta and a Gandhi cap. These men face the gate of the Old Patna Secretariat and the one in front holds a flag while the others behind are falling or already fallen down. The sculpture tells the story of seven young martyrs who are killed in cold blood while peacefully trying to hoist Congress flag at the Patna Secretariat. These young men personify the spirit of the Quit India Movement. Indian democracy owes its vibrancy and diversity to such sacrifices.

Quit India Movement was a watershed movement in the sense, that it prepared the ground for future politics in India. Gandhi ji in his

historic speech at Gowalia Tank Maidan had said, 'The power, when it comes, will belong to the people of India, and it will be for them to decide to whom it is placed....'. It is in the Quit India Movement that freedom struggle was owned by 'We the People' who fought for India's freedom.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his latest *Mann Ki Baat*, exhorted the youth of the nation to build a campaign 'Sankalp se Siddhi'. It is essentially a resolve to Quit India of the ills like poverty, corruption, terrorism, casteism and communalism. He said in the five years from 1942 to 1947, entire nation united to fight against the British. Similarly, 15th August, 2017 should be our Day of Resolve to free India of all these problems by 2022. This call of his in resonance with his earlier call to build a 'New India' — an India of new desires and dreams, an India that treats its poor equally, an India that fulfils the aspirations of Nari Shakti, an India that has deep bond between its people and democracy and an India that is rid of corruption and black money. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often said that he was born post-independence and did not have the chance to fight for its freedom. Similar is true for most youth of the country. 75 years of Quit India Movement will be a chance for all of us who 'could not die for our country', to 'live for it' and make our freedom fighters dreams come true.

(Courtesy PIB Feature)

More State News

Min Biswajit Instructs IPR authorities to initiate process to set up DIO offices in all districts

DIPR Imphal, Aug 6: Information and Public Relations Minister Shri Thongam Biswajit Singh today instructed officials of the department to send proposals of all the necessities of the department including strengthening of manpower, infrastructure and equipments so that the government may look into it.

Chairing the monthly review meeting of the department yesterday evening at his New Secretariat Conference Hall, Minister Biswajit expressed the need to strengthen man-power as well as procure more equipment for the department so that the department may carry out its responsibilities properly. He said the department authorities should also send proposals for purchase of required vehicles for the department.

Expressing the need to set up District Information Offices in all the districts of the State including the newly created ones, he said the



department should initiate process to open DIO offices. He added that office buildings should be rented if it is necessary.

He said once the district offices are opened, required number of staffs should be provided for the new

offices to function properly.

Further observing that spreading awareness on social issues including the misuse of social media is a responsibility of the IPR, Minister Biswajit said the department should consult with the concerned authorities about the dos and don'ts of social media and erect hoardings in all major towns to spread awareness among the public.

In response to an observation from the Tamenglong DIO regarding

encroachment at the DIO Tamenglong office, the Minister strongly instructed the department officials to ensure that all land records of the department's offices and plots are in the name of the department and concerned district offices.

The Minister also said the publication section of the department should ensure timely publication of the department's annual calendar and diary. He said the department should also maintain quality in the publication of the calendar and diary.

He further observed that Secretariat officials of the department and staffs at the directorate should work in proper coordination for the smooth functioning of the department. Minister Biswajit also instructed the authorities to apprise the concerned contractor working at the Keishampat complex of the department to expedite work and complete the ongoing portion of the construction before the set deadline.

The meeting was also attended by IPR Commissioner K Radhakumar Singh, Director Meghachandra Kongbam, Deputy Secretary Smt. Maibam Kamala, Deputy Secretary Smt. Ch.Sachi Devi, APO (P), DIOs of all offices among others.

Letter to Editor

On Kakching as district head quarter

Sir,

Proposal to set up Kakching district headquarter at a place other than Kakching is no less than undermining and ignoring the effort and aspiration of Kakching. The said proposal made by some MLAs to set up Kakching district headquarter at a geographically midpoint of the district is illogical and is a move to create hatred amongst its people.

Is Imphal east and west districts headquarters placed considering where it geographically stands in the respective districts? And are the headquarter located centrally in the district.

December 8, 2016 was a historic day in Manipur as 7 new district were created that day. Kakching district was a dream come true to its people and fruit of a long journey and demand for district hood. It may be remembered that since 1981 Kakching district demand committee began its demand for a Kakching district.

The proposal to set up district headquarters to Waikhong or any other place is a move to uproot the dreams and integrity of the Kakching people.

The proposal to set up Kakching district HQ else where is no less than instigating hatred and is an open invitation for a civil war among its people (Kakching district).

One simple question is why the district was named Kakching district when it can be named Waikhong district or any other name if Kakching wasn't going to be the district HQ.

Yours' Faithfully
Naorem Mangang (Pathou)
Kakching

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