

WITHDRAWAL OF SPG COVER

# Cong slams govt: 'Playing with lives of Gandhis'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

CONGRESS LEADERS and chief ministers on Friday hit out at the Central government over its decision to withdraw the Special Protection Group (SPG) cover given to Congress president Sonia Gandhi and her children Rahul and Priyanka.

"The BJP has descended to the ultimate personal vendetta mechanism, compromising the lives of family members of two former Prime Ministers to acts of terror and violence," senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel said. His party colleague Anand Sharma said the decision was "shocking and vindictive".

The party asked the government to explain the basis of the decision. "It makes the family vulnerable. Don't forget that two members of the family — Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi — were assassinated. The state has a duty to protect and SPG cover was not a favour. The UPA government never withdrew Atalji's cover," Sharma said.

The Congress released a letter that four senior leaders — former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, A K Antony, Ahmed Patel and M Veerappa Moily — had written to the Cabinet Secretary on November 5 asking the government to treat security matters of the three in a non-partisan manner. They had argued that "any change in the status of their security prejudicial to the three protectees... shall be malafide and... shall be an ill-advised act of commission on the part of which, government which would place their lives in danger and under direct threat."

Addressing a press conference, Congress communication department head Randeep Surjewala said the SPG had written to Rahul four times on the threat perception. "On August 6,

2018, November 6, 2018, June 06, 2019 and August 29, 2019, the same SPG, on a review of the security protectee Rahul Gandhi in tandem with Intelligence Bureau, Research and Analysis Wing, wrote to him saying there is a threat perception to his life from Islamic terrorist group, from Khalistani terror group, from ultras and Naxalite groups active from Chhattisgarh up to Wayanad and that he should be taking such precautions... The question is what has changed in 60 days," he said.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and his Rajasthan counterpart Ashok Gehlot asked the government to reconsider the "politically motivated" decision, particularly in view of the prevailing security scenario.

"The Central government has showed extreme pettiness and total disregard for the safety of a family that had made huge sacrifices for the country," Singh said.

"SPG cover was given under Act of Parliament. It is for protecting the lives... The kind of politics they are doing shows their mental bankruptcy. Prime Minister should intervene if the home minister has taken the decision on his own level..." Gehlot said.

At a press conference, Congress general secretary K C Venugopal said it was the A B Vajpayee government that amended the SPG Act to "give the family of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi SPG cover. Modi and Shah have undone it. Former Prime Minister V P Singh made the same mistake for Rajiv Gandhi and the country paid a price for it in the assassination of Rajiv. Blinded by personal revenge and political vendetta, Modi and Shah are doing the same thing."

He said there is a "threat" to the life of Sonia and Rahul, and "they are playing with the lives of Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka".

# Govt may invite Brazil President as chief guest for 2020 R-Day

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

THE GOVERNMENT is considering inviting Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro as chief guest for the Republic Day celebrations in 2020, sources have told *The Indian Express*. They said the proposal is being explored and may take final shape.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to meet Bolsonaro next week when he visits Brasilia for the annual BRICS summit on November 13 and 14.

Bolsonaro, widely seen as a far-right firebrand and a political outsider, was sworn in as the 38th president of Latin America's largest democracy early this year. If he is invited, this will be the third time a Brazilian



PM Narendra Modi is set to meet Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro next week

President will be chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations, after Fernando Henrique Cardoso in 1996 and Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in 2004.

During his visit to Brazil, the Prime Minister will also hold a bilateral meeting with Bolsonaro. This will be the Prime

Minister's second visit to Brazil. New Delhi has been weaving strategy with hospitality to decide its chief guests for the Republic Day. The choice of chief guest every year is dictated by a number of reasons — strategic and diplomatic, business interests and geopolitics.

This year, after the invitation to US President Donald Trump did not work out, South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa was invited as the chief guest. Ten leaders from ASEAN countries were invited in 2018.

Prior to that, then US president Barack Obama attended it in 2015, French President Francois Hollande in 2016 and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in 2017.

Modi and Bolsonaro have met

a few times this year, including on the sidelines of the G-20 summit and the recently-concluded Future Investment Initiative business forum in Riyadh.

Bolsonaro had congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the latter's re-election in May 2019. When they met on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Osaka on 29 June 2019, key issues of bilateral importance were discussed during the meetings.

Officials said India and Brazil share a very close and multifaceted relationship at the bilateral level as well as in plurilateral fora such as BRICS, BASIC, G-20, G-4, IBSA, International Solar Alliance, Biofuture Platform and in the larger multilateral bodies such as the UN, WTO, UNESCO and WIPO.

# Demonetisation led to economic disaster: Oppn

Nov 8 marks milestone in fight against corruption, says Smriti Irani

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, LUCKNOW, KOLKATA, NOVEMBER 8

ON THE third anniversary of demonetisation on Friday, Opposition parties attacked the Narendra Modi government over its decision to scrap high-value currency notes.

While Congress chief Sonia Gandhi said demonetisation was a "Tughlaqi blunder" inflicted by a "tyrannical government" that wiped out over 1 crore jobs, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said it led to an "economic disaster". The SP and BSP said demonetisation and the GST resulted in economic slowdown.

Union minister Smriti Irani, meanwhile, hailed the move as a milestone. "8 November marks the biggest crackdown against the corrupt & celebration of the honest - PM @narendramodi ji's historic decision of Demonetisation is a milestone in India's fight against corruption resulting in a transparent economy & increased tax compliance," she tweeted.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi likened the move to a terror attack. "It's three years since the demonetisation terror attack that devastated the Indian economy, taking many lives, wiping out lakhs of small businesses and leaving millions of Indians unemployed. Those behind this vicious attack have yet to be brought to justice," he tweeted.

"...demonetisation is perhaps the single most appropriate metaphor for the BJP's ill-conceived 'governance model'. It was a preposterous measure fuelled by false propaganda, which did untold damage to innocent and trusting countrymen," Sonia said.

Sonia said Modi had promised to wipe out black money, eliminate fake currency and purge terrorism and Naxalism. "...the PM

added the objective of abolition of cash currency usage and replacing it with a digital economy. Three years later, Modi has failed spectacularly on all these counts," she said.

"It is now widely acknowledged as a herculean blunder by independent economists and taught, across the world, as a cautionary tale of 'what governments should not do'. Yet, despite all the empty rhetoric about holding himself accountable, the Prime Minister and his colleagues never once took responsibility for — or even acknowledged — this faux pas..." she said.

"Today is the third anniversary of #DeMonetisationDisaster. Within minutes of announcement, I had said it will ruin the economy and the lives of millions. Renowned economists, common people & all experts now agree. Figures from RBI have also shown it was a futile exercise," TMC chief Mamata Banerjee tweeted. "Economic disaster started on that day and look where it has reached now. Banks stressed, economy in a complete slump. All affected..."

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said, "The note ban ruined the economy and led to unemployment. Most farmers are committing suicide due to note ban and imposition of GST. The informal sector has been affected..."

Akhilesh was speaking in Lucknow at the birthday celebrations of Khajanchi, who was born when his mother was standing in a bank queue to exchange demonetised notes.

BSP chief Mayawati tweeted: "The Central government of the BJP without any preparation and in a hurry announced demonetisation. The negative impact... has come to the fore over the last three years. The note ban is the main cause for increasing unemployment and the worsening economy of the country..."

INX MEDIA MONEY-LAUNDERING CASE

# Delhi HC reserves order on Chidambaram's bail application

ANAND MOHAN J  
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

THE DELHI High Court on Friday reserved its order on the regular bail application filed by Congress leader and former Union minister P Chidambaram, who is in Tihar jail over his alleged involvement in the INX Media money-laundering case.

Justice Suresh Kait heard the ED's arguments and suggested that if he reads the sealed documents submitted by the agency, he can put forward their submission to Chidambaram's counsel without revealing crucial details.

This was opposed by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who told the judge that it would set a bad precedent, following which the judge reserved the order.

When the hearing began, the judge asked Mehta how many witnesses the agency had examined between October 24 and 30,



Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram

when Chidambaram was in their custody. Mehta said three witnesses were summoned and while two did not appear, the third gave a handwritten letter and the witness is "so scared" that he does not want to be confronted with Chidambaram. Mehta said he would place relevant documents to satisfy the court's conscience.

The HC pointed said Chidambaram's counsel had argued that up to October 24, there was no allegation of influencing witnesses and on October 30, when they sought extension of his police custody, which was denied by the trial court, the ED argued that he tried to influence wit-

nesses. To this, Mehta said the contention would only come while arguing on the bail application and not at the time of seeking his police custody.

Chidambaram, through his counsel Kapil Sibal, Abhishek Manu Singhvi and Arshdeep Singh, sought bail saying that as the evidence is documentary and in the custody of probe agencies, he cannot tamper with it.

Sibal said the probe agency's case was never that the Congress leader tried to influence witnesses, but suddenly in October, it was alleged that he had tried to influence key witnesses.

"I am in jail. I do not have a phone. I am meeting my family members... If they attribute a particular act to me I can respond, but they give it in a sealed cover. This is the problem with the sealed cover. I don't know what they have said. Is that the influence that he (witness) would come and write a letter?" Sibal said.

# Man held as Uttarakhand MLA alleges he tried to set him on fire

Dehradun: Uttarakhand Police on Friday detained a man after Congress's Kedamath MLA Manoj Rawat alleged that he tried to set him on fire. The Congress announced a protest against the government over the incident in all district headquarters on Saturday.

No FIR has been filed so far. Rawat's staff said the incident took place when he was going to attend an event in a college in Augustmuni police station area on Friday. "A man was walking around with a petrol can... When he tried to approach the MLA, I pushed him away," said Sandeep Kumar, the MLA's security guard.

"...The accused was identified as Jeetpal Singh and he has been detained. He is unemployed and said that he had gone there to refill the fuel tank of his bike and had an argument with the MLA," said Ravindra Kaushal of Augustmuni police station. The Congress claimed the accused was part of the liquor mafia and Rawat had opposed his activities. **ENS**



TODAY'S DATE IS 9,  
EVEN NUMBERED CAR OWNERS,  
TAKE THE BUS AND YOU'LL BE FINE

## DELHI'S POLLUTION IS DOWN BY 25%

BUT SMOKE FROM STUBBLE BURNING IS COMING TO DELHI  
SO, ODD EVEN IS BEING INTRODUCED ONCE AGAIN

1. On odd dates - 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 November - only vehicles with number plates ending with an odd number - 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 - can ply on the roads
2. On even dates - 4, 6, 8, 12, 14 November - only vehicles with number plates ending with an even number - 0, 2, 4, 6, 8 - can ply on the roads.
3. This rule is applicable from Monday to Saturday, from 8am to 8pm
4. Odd Even rules are not applicable on two-wheelers
5. Cars with only women commuters or cars carrying children wearing school uniform will be exempt
6. Violation of Odd Even will attract a fine of Rs 4,000

