

Cong demands withdrawal of 'Modi Tax' on petrol, diesel

Accuses govt of earning over Rs 20 lakh crore through taxes even as common man suffers

NEW DELHI

AMID rising fuel prices, the Congress on Tuesday demanded immediate withdrawal of taxes on the petroleum products, and alleged that in the last over six years the government has earned more than Rs 20 lakh crore through taxes even as a common man suffers. Calling it 'Modi Tax', Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera while addressing a press conference said, "We demand an immediate withdrawal of this additional Modi Tax imposed over the last 6.8 years. This in itself will reduce petrol price to Rs 61.92 per litre and diesel price to Rs 47.51 per litre. Every common Indian deserves this relief immediately."

He said, "In the last 6.8 years, the government has earned over Rs 20 lakh crore by imposing additional excise duty on petrol and diesel. In May 2014, the international crude oil price was \$108 per barrel and petrol was selling at Rs 71.51 per litre in Delhi, while



What are the emotions through which they try to keep India busy? Anger! Hatred! Fear! Their strategy is predictable, generate these emotions and create villains

diesel was selling at Rs 57.28 per litre in Delhi."

"The international crude oil price as on February 1 was \$54.41 per barrel and yet as of today, the price of petrol is Rs 89.29 per litre in Delhi whereas diesel is

selling at Rs 79.70 per litre. Over the last six years, the additional excise burden -- Modi Tax -- on the common consumer has been increased by Rs 23.78 per litre on petrol and by Rs 28.37 per litre on diesel -- 820 per cent on diesel and 258 per cent on petrol."

"We do not see the result of government's spending to the tune of Rs 20 lakh crore on any sector, whether it is the agriculture sector, the MSMEs or government employees or any other sector?" said Khera.

He alleged that the BJP ecosystem has always tried to keep people emotionally occupied.

"What are the emotions through which they try to keep India busy? Anger! Hatred! Fear! Their strategy is predictable, generate these emotions and create villains. For this, they will borrow from mythology, from their version of history, from global events that may have nothing to do with us. They will keep invoking villains against who our collective emotions can be directed," said Khera.

Previous govts ignored deserving leaders: Modi



LUCKNOW

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday asserted that his government was trying to rectify the "mistakes" of the previous governments which did not honour deserving warriors and leaders as he laid the foundation stone for a statue of warrior king Suheldev of Shravasti in Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich. He also unveiled through video conferencing programmes for beautification of Shravasti, Chittora Lake and Bahraich.

Speaking on the occasion, he accused previous governments of not honouring deserving leaders like Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and B R Ambedkar. "It is unfortunate that deserving leaders were not given the place of pride they deserved," Modi said, adding his government was trying to rectify the mistakes of the past governments.

The projects, which include construction of a 4.20-metre high equestrian statue of the warrior king Suheldev, will also focus on the development of various tourist amenities including a cafeteria, guest house and a children's park. Besides the projects, Modi inaugurated a medical college in Bahraich named after Suheldev. He also lauded the efforts of the Uttar

Pradesh government in tackling the coronavirus pandemic and leading the state on the path of development. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath attended the event.

King Suheldev, an icon of the Rajbhar community, had defeated and killed the Ghaznavid general Ghazi Saiyyad Salar Masud in a battle on the banks of the Chittora lake in Bahraich in 1033. After coming to power, the Modi government has taken concerted steps to popularise Suheldev. Before the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the Prime Minister had released a postal stamp in the memory of Suheldev and flagged off a superfast train 'Suheldev Express' that runs tri-weekly between Ghazipur in Purvanchal (UP) and Anand Vihar in Delhi. Earlier, in February 2016, then BJP chief Amit Shah had unveiled a statue of Suheldev and also launched a book on him, in Bahraich district near the Indo-Nepal border, where the medieval king enjoys a legendary status. During his tenure as UP chief minister, Rajnath Singh, the present Defence minister, had unveiled the statue of Suheldev at an important road crossing in Lucknow.

Rajbhar community members, who consider Suheldev as their icon, constitute a significant percentage of the Purvanchal electorate and are regarded as the second politically dominant force to reckon with after the Yadavs in eastern Uttar Pradesh. Since the Rajbhar vote bank is not intact, different parties try to woo them for electoral support from time to time, say political observers, pointing out that Tuesday's event was taking place when UP Assembly polls were less than a year away. (PTI)

Irani dares Rahul to take out money from tea traders in Guj

VANSDA (GUJ)

SMRITI Irani on Tuesday dared Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to "take out money" from the pockets of small tea traders of Gujarat and to contest elections from the State if he has "guts". She also alleged the Congress' "hatred and prejudice" towards Gujarat and its people was not new, "as Rahul Gandhi and his party had objected to the proposal to build the Statue of Unity in the memory of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in Gujarat". Irani was referring to the remarks made by the former Congress chief at a poll rally in Assam in which he spoke about hiking

the daily wage of tea workers by making tea garden owners from Gujarat pay, if his party is voted to power in that State. "Rahul Gandhi recently said in a rally in Assam that he will take out money from the pockets of small tea traders of Gujarat. Earlier, they (Congress) had issues with the tea seller (PM Narendra Modi), and now they have problems with those who drink tea," Irani said at a public rally for upcoming elections to local bodies held at Vandsa town in Navsari district. "I want to challenge Rahul Gandhi to try (azma lo) Gujarat if he has guts. I also challenge him to contest polls from Gujarat."



UDF to wind up Kerala Bank if elected to power: Chennithala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

MAKING its position clear, Leader of Opposition Ramesh Chennithala on Tuesday categorically said 'if elected to power in the upcoming Assembly polls, the Congress-led UDF will wind up the operations of the Kerala Bank'. The bank was formally launched by the Chief Minister in a function held in the state capital in 2019. The Pinarayi Vijayan-led Left government had made it very clear right from the time they assumed office in 2016 that the Kerala Bank would be formed by merging 14 district cooperative banks with the Kerala State Cooperative Bank (KSCB) and it would be named as Kerala Bank. Earlier, the Cooperative banks in the state had a three-tier structure with the primary banks at the grassroots level which were attached to the respective district banks and the apex body was the KSCB. This changed after Vijayan launched the Kerala Bank. Speaking to the media at his hometown in Alappuzha as part of his statewide yatra, Chennithala said the present Kerala

Chennithala's statement comes a day after the Kerala High Court acting on a petition from a Kottayam resident stating that the Kerala government was on the sly trying to regularise the appointment of 1,850 temporary employees working in various posts in Kerala Bank, stayed this move of the Pinarayi Vijayan government

Bank was an illegal entity and even the Reserve Bank of India had made its position clear on it.

"The once fledgling cooperative banking sector in the State has been destroyed in the name of the Kerala Bank. If we return to power, the Kerala Bank will be wound up," said Chennithala.

Chennithala's statement comes a day after the Kerala High Court acting on a petition from a Kottayam resident stating that the Kerala government was on the sly trying to regularise the appointment of 1,850 temporary employees working in various posts in Kerala Bank, stayed this move of the Pinarayi Vijayan government.



Trouble mounts for Cong govt as one more MLA resigns

PUDUCHERRY

ONE more ruling Congress legislator A John Kumar, a close confidant of Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy, resigned his MLA post on Tuesday, in yet another jolt to the ruling Congress dispensation ahead of the Assembly polls due in few months.

Kumar, who was elected from the Kamaraj Nagar constituency in the 2019 bypoll, is the fourth Congress lawmaker to quit the party ahead of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's visit to Puducherry on Wednesday to kick-start the Congress poll campaign.

His resignation comes close on the heels of senior party legislator Malladi Krishna Rao, who had earlier quit as Health minister, resigning from the post of MLA on Monday.

John Kumar called on Speaker V P Sivakolundhu at his office and handed over his handwritten letter of resignation, official sources said.

The Speaker told PTI he was perusing the letter and would take a decision soon.

He said he had received Malladi Krishna Rao's resignation letter from the House through fax on Monday night.

With his resignation, the strength of the ruling Congress in the territorial Assembly has come down to 10 and both the treasury and the opposition will now have 14 members each. The assembly has 30 elected seats and three nominated seats. (PTI)