

Must compete with China in creating jobs: Rahul

BENGALURU, APRIL 8/- Congress president Rahul Gandhi today said said the government would be able to instill faith among the young only by competing with China in creating jobs, and asserted the issue would be the central theme for India in the coming years.

China would be India's competitor in the sector for the next 30 years, Gandhi said. "The only way for the government to instill faith in it among young people is to create jobs by competing with China, which will be India's competitor for the next 30 years," he said, adding that the issue of job creation would be the central theme in the future.

For a change to take place, there has to be a shift in mindsets, just as there was before the Green revolution and the telecom boom, he said during an interaction with business people here.

Replying to a query, he said small entrepreneurs had a big role to play in the country's development and the Central government should support them in creating jobs. "I also think there has to be a different vision and structure for large and small industries," he added.

To another question, Gandhi said the Congress would start the process of drafting a national manifesto in the next few months.

"We are going to produce a national manifesto of the Congress party over the next few months. We are having conversations over it within the Congress to create the manifesto. It is a big step. We will start the process," he said.

Replying to yet another query, Gandhi said the Congress did not oppose the GST "designed" by the BJP. He said the Congress had insisted on a one-layer tax to combat corruption. "We want a one-layer GST" so that there is no corruption taking place," he added.

Gandhi said the Congress would review GST once it came back to power. He also said India's GST, which is similar to that of Pakistan and Sudan, was the most complex tax regime in the world. "Experts have said the most complex tax regime in the world is GST in India. So we will transform the current GST, which I call Gabbar Singh Tax, into simple GST by having one layer, which includes petroleum products," he said. To a question, Gandhi said the NDA's bullet train project was just a showpiece and poorly conceptualised.

Test of oppn unity during UP council polls as parties prepare

LUCKNOW, APRIL 8/- Opposition unity will be tested during the UP Legislative Council polls, with all lights on how the ruling party and the opposition chalking out their course of action.

The notification for polls to 13 seats of the council would be issued tomorrow. The election would be held on April 26 and counting of votes would take place the same day.

After securing a thumping win in the recently concluded biennial Rajya Sabha elections from the state by bagging nine out of 10 seats that went to polls, the BJP is confident of securing at least 11 council seats going by its brute strength in the assembly along with its allies.

In the 100-member UP Legislative Council, the BJP has just 13 members. The Samajwadi Party has 61 members, the BSP nine, the Congress two, the RLD one and others 12. Two seats are vacant.

To ensure victory, a candidate needs 29 first preference votes, the state election office said. Arithmetically, the BJP and its

allies are likely to win 11 out of 13 seats comfortably and still be left with five additional votes.

Exuding confidence about the ruling party increasing its tally in the Upper House, UP BJP general secretary Vijay Bahadur Pathak said, "Our party will register a thumping win in the council polls, bagging 11 of the 13 seats going to polls."

Samajwadi Party spokesperson and MLC Sunil Singh Sajan said the SP-BSP combine would comfortably win two seats. "With the backing of the BSP and the Congress along with mass support, we will ensure a grand performance in the Lok Sabha polls. In these (council) polls, the BJP may have the numbers, but in the general elections we will have people's mandate," SP chief and former chief minister Akhilesh Yadav said.

The party's confidence stems from the victory of the SP-BSP combine in the recent Lok Sabha bypolls.

The combine struck gold in the UP assembly election last year, when the party's confidence stems from the victory of the SP-BSP combine in the recent Lok Sabha bypolls.

represented by his deputy Keshav Prasad Maurya.

UP Congress spokesperson Ashok Singh said, "Going purely by numbers, we cannot field any party candidate (for the council polls), but we can support the candidates from other like-minded parties. However, we expect the BSP to support our candidate (if we decide to field one), since we supported the BSP candidate in the Rajya Sabha elections," he said.

According to the Election Commission, tenures of 13 MLCs, including SP national president Akhilesh Yadav and two ministers in the Adityanath-led government, Mahendra Kumar Singh and Mohsin Raza, will end on May 5.

Of the 13 seats falling vacant, seven were held by the SP two each by the BJP and the BSP and one RLD. The thirteenth seat was held by former SP minister Ambika Chaudhary. His seat fell vacant when he switched over from the SP to the BSP.

Apart from the SP chief, six other MLCs from the party whose term is coming to an end are state party

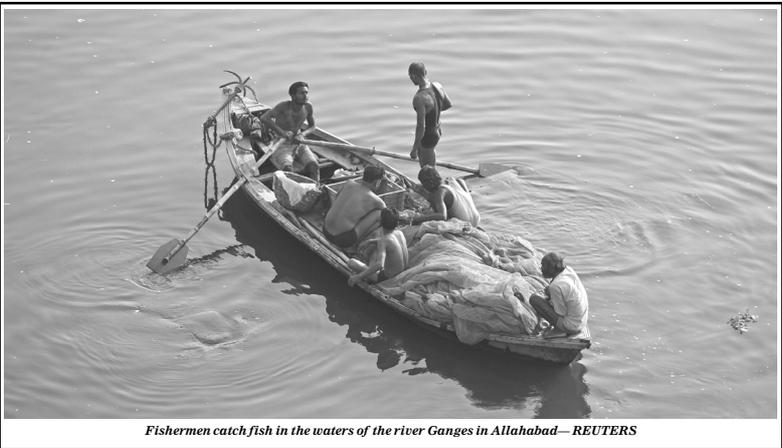
unit chief Naresh Chandra Uttam, senior party spokesman Rajendra Chaudhary, Umar Ali Khan, Madhu Gupta, Ramsakal Gurjar and Vijay Yadav.

Other MLCs, whose term ends on May 5, are Vijay Pratap and Sunil Kumar Chittor (both the BSP) and Chaudhary Mushtaq, the lone RLD member.

Though the BJP and its allies have 324 MLAs in the 403-member state Assembly, it might not get the required strength in the Upper House to get the bills passed even after winning 11 of the 13 seats by dint of its strength.

During the Winter Session of the state legislature last year, the Adityanath-led government had suffered embarrassment when it failed to ensure the passage of the Uttar Pradesh Control of Organised Crime (UPCOC) Bill in the Upper House.

The last date for filing nominations for the council polls is April 16. Scrutiny of nominations will be done on April 17, while the last date for withdrawal of the same is April 19. (PTI)



Fishermen catch fish in the waters of the river Ganges in Allahabad — REUTERS

Cong, if voted to power at Centre, will learn from Karnataka on rewarding sanitation workers: Rahul

BENGALURU, APRIL 8/- Congress president Rahul Gandhi today said that his party, if voted to power at the Centre, would learn from Karnataka on how to reward sanitation workers.

Gandhi, who is on the sixth leg of his tour of poll-bound Karnataka, was interacting with P o u r a k a r m i k a s (sanitation workers) here. Chief Minister

Siddaramaiah, who was present with city Mayor R Sampath Raj, told Gandhi that Karnataka has abolished the sanitation contractors hiring sanitation workers and enhanced their salaries from Rs 7,500 to Rs 18,000.

When Gandhi asked the sanitation workers about their expectations from the government in the next five years, they unanimously demanded that they should be regularised.

They, however, thanked Chief Minister Siddaramaiah for increasing their salaries from Rs 7,500 per month to Rs 18,000. Hailing the Chief Minister, Gandhi said "Now, when we get the government in Delhi, we will learn from the Karnataka government because the person doing the most difficult work should be rewarded the most." "The problem in

India is that the person doing the most difficult work is not rewarded and the person doing the easiest work is rewarded.

That is what the Congress party wants to change." Former president of Karnataka Ka Safai Karmachari Avoor Narayan, welcomed Gandhi's statement and urged him to abolish the contract system of hiring sanitation workers across the country. (PTI)

TDP MPstry to protest near PM's residence, detained

NEW DELHI, APRIL 8/- Police today detained Telugu Desam Party (TDP) lawmakers when they attempted to protest near Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg here demanding the special category status to Andhra Pradesh. The decision to protest was taken after TDP lawmakers met at Rajya Sabha member and former Union minister Y S Chowdary's residence this morning to chalk out the next course of action. The lawmakers were detained on their way to the prime minister's residence. "Twenty MPs are sitting at Tughlak Road police station. Police will allow MPs to go after sometime. They were detained from Bhinder Point near Air Force Station, while they were marching towards the PM's house," a police officer said.

TDP lawmaker Jaydev Galla said: "The prime minister is the person to take decisions on the special status. He has to fulfil his promises and that is why we want to raise our demands with him." Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal met the lawmakers "in solidarity" at the police station. "We condemn their detention and fully support demand for spl status of AP (sic)," he said in a tweet later. The TDP withdrew its ministers in the Union cabinet and walked out of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) after the Centre denied the special status to Andhra Pradesh. The TDP had issued a no-confidence motion notice against the government. However, it was never taken up for discussion in Parliament due to repeated disruptions by political parties.

Kerala Govt withholds assent to medical colleges bill

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 8/- Kerala Governor P Sathasivam today withheld assent to the Kerala Professional Colleges (Regularisation of Admission in Medical colleges) Bill 2018.

The Governor withheld assent to the Bill under the provisions of Article 200 of the Constitution, Raj Bhavan sources said. The Governor also took into consideration the observations of the Supreme Court recently while ordering a stay on the Kerala Professional Colleges (Regularisation of Admission in Medical Colleges) Ordinance 2017, the sources said.

Article 200 empowers a Governor to either give or withhold assent to a bill or reserve it for the consideration of the President. The bill which was adopted in the assembly on April 3 this year, seeks to regularize admissions made in two medical colleges in 2016-17. The ruling CPI-M led LDF and Congress headed UDF opposition had supported the Bill when it was adopted in the assembly. The House had passed the Bill for regularising admission of students of the private Karuna Medical College, Palakkad and Kanuru Medical College in Kannur. The issue of two medical colleges came into focus recently after the Supreme Court stayed the ordinance promulgated by the CPI-M led LDF government. The legislation to regularise admission of 150 students of the Kanuru Medical College and 30 students of Karuna Medical College was passed to replace the ordinance.

Innovative housing scheme for people in tiny backwater islands

KOCHI, APRIL 8/- People living in sinking tiny backwater islands in southern Kerala hope that an innovative housing system coming up there would end the threat of displacement arising out of sea inundation due to global warming.

An eco-friendly amphibious housing model is being developed by a group of architects for poor and vulnerable people, who live in constant fear of floods in Munroe Thuruath islands in Kollam district.

The project is being implemented on a pilot basis by the CPI(M), Kerala's ruling political party.

CPI(M) politburo member S Ramachandran Pillai on Friday laid foundation stone for first such amphibious houses at Munroe Thuruath, which is a group of some tiny islands formed by backwaters of scenic Ashtamudi Lake and Kallada river.

Panchayat authorities said they were seeking a solution for providing affordable housing for people in the shrinking tiny islands, ranging from one acre to over one hectare.

Sabha member K N Balagopal, who took the initiative to address the housing problem in Munroe Thuruath, said the party discussed the idea of amphibious houses as water level was going up in some islands due to climate change.

"People find it very difficult to survive in such islands as saline water has invaded their houses. So we thought about a housing scheme which can provide living facilities for them both at the time of water logging and normal conditions," Balagopal told PTI.

He said the roofs, floors and walls of the amphibious houses are built with lightweight material. Their architectural features would help survive in islands' adverse climatic conditions.

"These houses can be designed to float with the rising water or constructed on stilts, he said. "It is a new concept in India", former Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh said, hailing the initiative to provide safe housing solutions for the affected people in the area.

"Politics aside, it appears a very interesting and innovative idea. I

hope there has been professional involvement", the senior Congress told PTI when his attention was drawn to the move by the CPI(M).

Noted climate expert Chandra Bhushan said that in an era of climate change, ways have to be evolved to adapt to sea level rise. "What I appreciate about this pilot project is that it is trying to find out whether we can live on inundated lands or not. We will get to learn many things from this like material and energy intensity of construction, management of water and waste," said Bhushan, who is also deputy director general of the New Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).

He said the bottom line is any climate adaptation project should not cause more ecological destruction. "The project proponents should keep this in mind", Bhushan told PTI.

Balagopal said he approached Kollam Centre of Indian Institute of Architects (a national body of architects) seeking a solution for the issue of housing problem in water logged islands. "There was an urgent need for experts to come

together to find a solution to make this beautiful region habitable," said Niranjan Das Sharma of Indian Institute of Architects.

He said they examined the area and found that it is water logged and saline. It was also found that the islands are sinking and tidal flooding lasts very long. He proposed two strategies. One, to restore the existing structures and the second, to propose a prototype," he said.

The structures to be made demanded some special characteristics, apart from the basic need of a house. They have to survive prolonged tidal flooding, rapid sinking and resistance to saline atmosphere, Sharma said.

He said one plan was to build an elevated structure using coconut tree trunks, locally available in plenty, floor platform with steel frame protected with epoxy paint, steel frame/wooden frame cavity wall using fibre cement boards and perforated steel windows.

This would be again raised by about three to four feet above ground to deal with rising water, he said. (PTI)

BSF to set up over 190 guest houses

***To beat loneliness among just-married jawans**

NEW DELHI, APRIL 8/- With a trooper getting to spend an average of only five years out of 30 with his family during service, the BSF has launched a new concept to set up over 190 jawan guest houses across the country for newly married couples.

More than 2,800 rooms will be built or carved out of the existing infrastructure in the eight frontiers of the force along the western and eastern border flanks of the country a Border Security Force officer said.

BSF Director General K K Sharma said the Union home ministry has recently accorded sanction to the force's proposal to set up 15 studio apartment-like facilities at each of its 186 battalion locations and few other stations.

"The duties in the force are tough and hard and jawans have to remain alone for the maximum part of their service. An average jawan gets to spend only about 2.5 months in an year with his family and if one has a service of about 30 years, then this figure comes to about five years in the entire job period.

"To ensure that the jawans get more time with their families, we are creating such facilities at 192 locations all across the country," Sharma told PTI.

The problem of living alone, separated from the family, affects the jawans more and hence, they are the ones who will be given priority in the allotment of these facilities, he said.

He said that while there are guest houses for the officers and sub-officers, there was no such facility for the jawans who are in the constable and head constable ranks.

"So, we have decided, to create a guest house of 15 studio apartment-like configuration in each battalion which will have an independent bedroom, kitchen, bathroom and television facility and a newlywed personnel in the jawan ranks will be allowed to stay with their spouse for a stipulated period, the director general said.

Sharma said the measure is part of the overall initiative to reduce stress and fatigue among the troops and to keep them motivated.

A senior BSF officer explained that these 15-room guest houses will have a common drawing room and will be provided with basic equipments for the kitchen and daily chores.

While preference will be given to newly married troops, those who want to bring their wives and children for vacations will also be eligible to avail these facilities for a specified period, the officer said.

Sharma said the force has also mooted a proposal to grant permission to the troops for residing out of the barracks in a rented public accommodation at locations along the Bangladesh and Pakistan frontiers where there is no threat to the security of the personnel.

"The troops will be allowed to rent premises at such locations and reside with their families. However, this approval will be given in specific areas only where there is no threat to the security of the troops," he said.

The BSF raised in 1985, is tasked to guard the borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh and has about 2.5 lakh personnel in its ranks. (PTI)



Normal hustle and bustle resumed at Hari Singh High Street on Sunday after Kashmir valley observed a general strike yesterday