



# THE TIMES OF INDIA

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Page No: 1 & 4

## Rahul hard sells UPA with 33% job quota for women promise

### Says It Will Be Congress Govt's 1st Order

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Chennai:** Launching the UPA election campaign from the southern tip of the country, Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday promised 33% reservation for women in all government-sector jobs.

"It will be the first order that the Congress government

**FULL COVERAGE: P 9**

will sign when it comes to power after the 2019 polls," Gandhi said at a public meeting in Nagercoil as DMK leader MK Stalin and other allies looked on. He also promised to implement the long-pending women's quota bill.

Upbeat about having sewed up poll pacts in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Jharkhand, Rahul said talks in J&K were in the final stages. "It is only the BJP that doesn't have an alliance," he said, adding that the Congress-led UPA



**STYLE STATEMENT:** Congress chief Rahul Gandhi interacting with students of Stella Maris College for Women in Chennai on Wednesday

### Rahul, Stalin call each other CM, PM

In the first public meeting of the DMK-Congress combine in Nagercoil on Wednesday, Congress president Rahul Gandhi called Stalin the next CM of Tamil Nadu after the DMK chief said the UPA would repeat its 2004 success by winning all 40 seats and Rahul Gandhi will become the PM. "In your (Gandhi's) hands the country will be safe," Stalin said. **P 9**

will win the Lok Sabha battle and the new government would investigate the corruption in the purchase of Rafale fighter planes.

Rahul first made the promise of 33% quota for women in

the morning, when he addressed students of Stella Maris College for Women. He reiterated it at his interaction with media later in the city.

► **Women's status, P 4**

### Hugged 'sad' Modi to show him love: Rahul

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Chennai:** "I feel Narendra Modi is a man who is not able to see the beauty of this world. He does not have the type of love he should have, so I thought that at least from my part I should show him affection."

Rahul Gandhi's response to a question on why he hugged Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Lok Sabha sent a packed audience of Stella Maris' students into peals of laughter.

Dressed in a grey t-shirt and blue jeans, Gandhi interacted casually with the college students on Wednesday, telling them to call him Rahul and not sir and to ask hard questions.

"He went on criticising and abusing my mother, father, grandmother and me. He looked very sad. But inside I felt affection for him, so decided to show him that," Gandhi said of Modi.

► **Education funding, P 4**

# 'Spending on edu low, will up that'

► From P 1

The Congress president basked in the admiration of students and smiled cheerfully as he wielded questions in a 45-minute interaction. He kept the students engaged with his witty replies to questions that touched on corruption, women empowerment, what he will do if he wins the Lok Sabha elections, the Rafale deal and crony capitalism.

"I'm here to listen to you, I'll tell you a little bit of what I think through this conversation. But I am here to listen to you, what you want from your leaders, what you want from your politicians," he said.

Rahul began the conversation speaking about "the ideological battle" going on in the country. "It is sharply divided, one is a unifying ideology that all should live together and the country should not be dominated by one idea; that all



states all languages must play a part in this country and no state should feel suppressed, oppressed, oppressed. But on the other side we have an ideology which is trying to impose their views on everyone."

Responding to the first question on his plans for education and research as some of the premier institutes were facing a cash crunch, he said, "It is a known fact that the country is spending minimum on education, we need to spend more. We have set the target of spending in education to 6%". He also batted for autonomy for educational institutes and said, "It's not just about spending money on education, it's about independence of educational institutions. I can come here and tell by listening to you for five minutes that you are an independ-

ent institution. You have the right to say and do whatever you like. And there is an atmosphere of openness and listening."

He kept taking a dig at Modi. "How many times have you seen the Prime Minister of India standing in the midst of 3,000 women like this? How many have had the opportunity to ask him what he thinks about education? Why doesn't he have the guts to come and stand in front of you and be questioned by you."

His smile disappeared momentarily when he was asked about his brother-in-law Robert Vadra (Priyanka's Gandhi's husband). Rahul said he would be the first to say that Vadra should be investigated, "But also investigate Prime Minister Narendra Modi for stealing ₹30,000 crore public money and giving it to Anil Ambani. He must be investigated for the Rafale scam," he said. "We fought and lost and

were thrashed. But you learn from this experience and grow," he said. "Your biggest teachers are the people who attack you, but don't hate them. If they give you hate, you hug them and they will learn a lot. That is the nature of this country," he said amidst loud applause.

The meeting created a buzz on social media as videos of his talk and reactions from the students went viral on twitter. "I usually do not follow politics, but after hearing his speech, I will from now," said a student. She was interrupted by another who said, "We now know that our country is in safe hands. And we will vote for the right leader."

S Spandana, another student from the English department of Stella Maris, said, "He is so informal and interactive. He has no airs about being from the illustrious Gandhi family. His speech was very inspiring."

## Status of women better in South India: Rahul

► From P 1

Rahul said, "We will not only pass the bill for 33% reservation for women in Parliament, but will implement it in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and state legislatures". Setting the tone early in the day, Rahul praised South Indian women for their strength. To a question on the status of women in the country, he said, "The situation is better in South India when compared to the north. But there's still scope for improvement."

He said if the UPA formed a government, the Women's Reservation Bill would be passed and 33% jobs in Centre and states would be reserved for women. Promising to simplify GST with a single and lower tax, Rahul said the Congress' promise of minimum income guarantee will be a gamechanger.