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Registered & Admin Office: No.15, Murthy's Plaza, Karia Gounder Street, Khaderpet, Tirupur - 641 601.

Factory: Shed No.40, Nethaji Apparel Park, Eettiveerampalayam, New Tirupur - 641 666.

Tel No : +91-0421 2231896, +91-0421 2357140

E-mail : accounts@junctionfabrics.in **Website:** www.garmentmantra.com



EC issues notice to RaGa for *panauti*, other jibes

Congress leader used the words for PM Modi during recent rallies in Rajasthan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, 23 November

The Election Commission (EC) issued a show-cause notice to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday for his “panauti”, “pickpocket” and “loan waiver for the super rich” jibes at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and asked him to respond by Saturday.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had approached the poll panel against the former Congress president, saying it was “unbecoming” of a “very senior leader” to use such language.

The EC reminded Gandhi that the Model Code of Conduct prohibits leaders from making unverified allegations against political rivals.

The Congress leader used those words targeting the prime minister at recent rallies in poll-bound Rajasthan.

In its representation to the EC, the BJP had asserted that the allegation of grant of waivers to industrialists of ₹14,00,000 crore over the last nine years was “not borne out on facts”.

The EC notice said the expression “panauti” ex-facie falls in the equity of the prohibition of section 123 of the Representation of the People Act, dealing with corrupt practices.

Clause 2, sub section (ii) of section 123 states that any person who induces or attempts to induce a candidate or an elector to believe that he, or any person in whom he is interested, will become or will be rendered an object of divine displeasure or spiritual censure, shall be

deemed to interfere with the free exercise of the electoral right of such a candidate or elector, the notice reminded Gandhi.

The Congress leader had used the “panauti” barb against Modi in a poll speech in Rajasthan as the prime minister had attended the World Cup cricket final that India lost to Australia after 10 consecutive wins in the tournament.

A Hindi slang, “panauti” loosely refers to someone who brings bad luck.

The former Congress president took the “pickpocket” dig at Modi during a poll speech on Wednesday, alleging that the prime minister diverts people’s attention while industrialist Gautam Adani picks their pockets. This is how pickpockets operate, he had alleged.

The notice also recalled a general

advisory issued by the EC, in which the poll panel had expressed concerns at the “plummeting level of political discourse” during electioneering.

The commission also told Gandhi about a Supreme Court observation that if freedom of speech and expression is protected by Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, the right to reputation is also considered to be an inextricable part of the right to life protected by Article 21 and “balancing these two rights is a constitutional necessity”.

“Accordingly, you are requested to provide your explanation on the allegation made and to show causes as to why action as deemed fit for alleged violation of Model Code of Conduct and relevant penal provisions is not initiated by the commission.

Moitra’s expulsion from LS being planned, says Mamata

Breaking her silence on the “cash-for-query” allegation against TMC MP Mahua Moitra, party chief Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said that plans were in the works to expel her from Parliament but any such action would help the lawmaker from Krishnanagar ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Last week, Moitra, who is facing recommendations for expulsion from Lok Sabha, was tasked with strengthening the party’s organisation in Nadia district, in a clear message of support from the TMC.

“Now, they are planning to

expel Mahua (from Parliament). She will become more popular as a result. Whatever she used to say inside (Parliament), she will now say those things outside. Would anyone do something like this three months before the elections if he is not stupid?” Banerjee said, addressing a special session of the party at the Netaji Indoor Stadium.

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey had accused Moitra of taking bribes for asking questions in the House at the behest of businessman Darshan Hiranandani.

PTI

The Lok Sabha secretariat has underscored the confidentiality of government’s replies to MPs during the Question Hour in the House and asked them to access their portal only for their exclusive use, a development triggered by the raging “cash-for-query” row involving TMC MP Mahua Moitra.

“It may be noted that since the replies are log-in and password protected on the Members’ Portal, they are exclusively for the use of Members only,” it said in its bulletin dated November 10, a day after the the House’s Ethics Committee recommended Moitra’s expulsion.

Members are, therefore, requested to maintain confidentiality of the replies and not to share the contents with others until the Question Hour is over, it added. It informed that the replies made in response to a question is “strictly confidential” until the question for oral answer has been asked and answered in the House.

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ARCHIS MOHAN
New Delhi, 23 November

Recent developments in Karnataka, where Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has aligned with Vokkaliga leaders to urge the Siddaramaiah-led government to discard a 2015 caste census report, have ignited a new of power struggle between the two leaders.

The controversy has prompted the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to highlight the contradictions within the Congress regarding the issue of caste census and the Opposition INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) bloc.

Shivakumar, the Congress’ foremost Vokkaliga leader and its state unit chief, has signed a petition demanding that the state government scrap the socio-economic and educational survey conducted by the earlier Siddaramaiah government in 2015. The petition calls for a fresh ‘scientific’ nm Ce

