











# Priyanka Gandhi's candidature may turn Wayanad bypoll into battle of women contenders as CPI, BJP preps

The picturesque district of Wayanad will once again capture the nation's attention as it is set to become the epicentre of a political showdown. Following Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's strategic move to vacate the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat for Raebareli, the party has announced that his sister Priyanka Gandhi will contest the ensuing bypoll, which will also mark her electoral debut. However, the stakes are equally high for the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), both of whom are scrambling to field candidates who can match Priyanka's appeal. CPI will field a candidate from the Left coalition, and the main constituent BJP is most likely to field a candidate from the NDA camp. If not, it might ask BDJS to field a candidate.

## UDF camp in high spirits

The United Democratic Front (UDF) is riding a wave of optimism, convinced that Priyanka's charisma and political lineage will secure a resounding victory. The UDF camp is also in high spirits, buoyed by the belief that Priyanka's entry will reinvigorate the party's base and attract a new cohort of voters. "Hers is a charismatic personality. She connects with the masses effectively. She carries the legacy and is often seen as empathetic and approachable. Her grassroots engagement and efforts to address local issues have earned her admiration. We expect a landslide victory for her," a leader from the Wayanad District Congress Committee to South First. The leader added that the party would effectively counter the allegations of CPI and BJP and make voters aware of the context in which Rahul contested and his decision to choose the Raebareli constituency. "CPI says that Congress chooses a safe place for

Rahul to contest. But we all know that it was not the case," he said. "Rahul chose Wayanad as a political statement to BJP's move to alienate the south. It should be remembered that Rahul got invitations from all the southern states, and yet he chose Wayanad," he added. "His candidature here also had its influence in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, as the district shares boundaries with both these states," said the leader. Commenting on BJP's pointed attack of nepotism regarding Priyanka's candidature, he said it is based on merit and her ability to connect with the electorate rather than solely her family name. "This decision will have to be seen as the party's strategic decision to project Rahul Gandhi as its face in the north and Priyanka Gandhi in the south. This approach leverages the party's unique strengths and will help to connect with different regional demographics. This demonstrates a calculated strategy rather than nepotism," added the leader.

Congress needs to decide who its 'biggest enemy' is, says Annie Raja  
CPI to fight BJP

In the case of LDF, the Communist Party of India (CPI) is most likely to field Annie Raja again. Annie, a seasoned politician and a prominent face of CPI, garnered significant support in the just-concluded Lok Sabha elections, where she finished as the runner-up in Wayanad. Her performance has naturally positioned her as a frontrunner within her party for the upcoming bypoll. Despite the buzz surrounding her potential candidacy, Annie Raja has publicly stated that no formal discussions have taken place within the party regarding the bypoll. "There have been no official talks about my candidacy. The party leadership, along with the LDF, will take a collective

decision after thorough deliberations," she told reporters. CPI's internal deliberations will likely focus on the need to present a candidate who can effectively counter the influence of Congress and BJP, in which the former had already fielded a strong contender. The party's decision will hinge on a range of factors, including the candidate's ability to mobilize grassroots support, articulate the party's vision, and engage with diverse voter demographics. At the same time, there are also demands from some quarters that the LDF should not field a candidate against Priyanka. To this, CPI state secretary Binoy Viswam, the other day, told the media that the party is contesting to ensure that non-Congress votes do not go to the BJP. He also criticised the decision of Congress to field Rahul in Raebareli and Wayanad, saying that the party should have taken up the challenge to fight against BJP by fielding Rahul in the North alone.

'Bravest of all':

Priyanka Gandhi hails Rahul's efforts after poll outcome

BJP for strategic calculations

As for BJP, it will be under significant pressure to field a candidate who can effectively challenge Priyanka Gandhi's formidable debut. Historically, BJP has struggled to secure a strong foothold in the Wayanad constituency, making this bypoll an important opportunity to bolster its presence in Kerala. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, BJP allowed ally Bharath Dharma Jana Sena (BDJS) to contest the Wayanad seat. However, it failed to make a significant impact. Learning from past experiences, BJP decided to take a more direct approach in 2024 by fielding its state president K Surendran against Rahul Gandhi. Despite a vigorous campaign,

Surendran finished in third place, highlighting the challenges the party faces in this region. However, the vote share increased. Though the candidature is determined by BJP's central leadership, some party insiders said that Surendran is unlikely to contest again. When DMK's Kanimozhi Karunanidhi mocked Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai for not winning a single election, a similar comparison was also made about K Surendran, who is yet to win a poll. "It's usual that voters might get influenced by a star candidate. It will not be a surprise if the party (BJP) decides to field a star candidate from its side. The state leadership has no one in mind. Let the central leadership decide it," said a BJP leader. Some party sources also said Sobha Surendran, a prominent and influential leader within the party, might be a probable candidate as she is considered a viable contender who can bring fresh energy to the BJP's campaign in Wayanad. They said her recent electoral performance, reputation as a dynamic leader, and experience in state politics could attract a broader base of voters, particularly those looking for an alternative to the Congress and LDF candidates. With Congress already fielding Priyanka Gandhi, CPI likely to nominate Annie Raja, and BJP expected to field a strong woman candidate, the stage will be set for a rare political battle among three prominent women candidates. Moreover, the outcome of this election will not only be significant for Wayanad but also for Kerala as a whole, as the constituency could send its lone woman MP to the 18th Lok Sabha.

# Mallikarjun Kharge questions PM Narendra Modi; how Opposition leaders reacted

UGC-NET June 2024 exam cancelled news: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and other Opposition leaders hit out at the Centre after the ministry of education cancelled UGC-NET on Wednesday evening saying the "integrity of the examination may have been compromised". Mallikarjun Kharge also attacked the government over the alleged irregularities in the medical entrance exam NEET, and asked when will Prime Minister Narendra Modi hold "NEET pareeksha pe charcha". The Congress dubbed the government led by Narendra Modi as "paper leak government" and asked whether the education minister would take responsibility now. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra lashed out at the Centre over the UGC-NET 2024 development and asked for accountability to be fixed. In a post in Hindi on X, Mallikarjun Kharge said, "Narendra Modi ji, you discuss exams a lot, but when will you hold 'NEET pareeksha pe charcha'. Cancellation of UGC-NET exam is a victory of the passion of lakhs of students," he said. "This is the defeat of Modi government's arrogance due to which they made a despicable attempt to trample the future of our youth," the Congress president added. Mallikarjun Kharge also said the Union education minister first says that no paper was leaked in NEET, but when arrests of education mafia were made in Bihar, Gujarat and Haryana, then the minister "accepts that some scam" has happened. "When will NEET exam be cancelled?" the senior Congress leader asked. "Modi ji, take responsibility to stop your government's rigging and paper leak in NEET exam



too," Kharge further said. Meanwhile, the Congress alleged that the Modi government was playing with the future of the youth. "Yesterday UGC-NET exam was conducted in various cities of the country. Today the exam was cancelled on suspicion of paper leak. First NEET paper was leaked and now UGC-NET paper. The Modi government has become a 'paper leak government'," the Congress posted on X. Reacting sharply to the examination cancellation, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also alleged that the BJP government's "corruption and laxity" is harmful to the youth. "After the news of scam in NEET exam, now the NET exam held on 18th June has also been cancelled due to the fear of irregularities. Will accountability be fixed now? Will the Education Minister take responsibility for this laxity?" Priyanka Gandhi asked in a post in Hindi. The Union education ministry, amid a raging row over the medical entrance exam NEET, ordered the cancellation of the UGC-NET and handed over the matter to the CBI for an investigation. The ministry also sought a report from the Bihar Police's Economic Offences Unit regarding alleged irregularities in the conduct of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (UG) 2024

in Patna and said further action would be taken based on the report.

## Big conspiracy against the country: Akhilesh Yadav

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav suspected "someone's big conspiracy against the country". "... And now after the news of irregularities, the UGC-NET exam has also been cancelled. Under the BJP rule, the paper mafia is rigging every exam, one after the other. This could also be someone's big conspiracy against the country," he wrote on X in Hindi. "Understand the deeper meaning: - If the police recruitment exam paper is leaked, the law and order situation will not improve. Due to which there will be unrest and instability in the country and state. - ? If there is fraud in the NEET exam, honest people will not be able to become doctors and in the future there will be a further shortage of doctors for treating the people of the country and dishonest people will become a threat to the lives of the public. - ? Due to the absence of UGC-NET exam, the already existing shortage of teachers will increase even more. The shortage of teachers will hinder the mental development of the country, which will prove to be extremely fatal for the country in the long run," Akhilesh Yadav added. "... This can be a very big conspiracy against the administration and human resources of our country, which will have far-reaching negative consequences. That is why this should be investigated rigorously under the supervision of the court and the culprits should be given the harshest punishment, and no criminal should be spared, no matter how big he is or how much power he has over him," he added.

## 'Education emergency': Shiv Sena (UBT)

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi alleged that the repeated and absolute failure to conduct national examinations fairly exposes the NTA's incompetence. "This is an education emergency and also lets down lakhs of students who diligently prepare for these entrance exams. , not to forget the mental pressure they go through. Cancelling is not the solution, accountability from government and NTA is. This absolute disregard to young students and their careers is unfortunate," she posted on X. Aaditya Thackeray of the Shiv Sena (UBT) also reacted to the Centre's order. "Education Emergency. However the central regime doesn't care about the lakhs of students. They're only focussed on PR."

## 'Ban NTA': NSUI

The National Students' Union of India (NSUI) has called for immediate action against the NTA. NSUI, the student wing of the Indian National Congress (INC), in a release, said this development has once again highlighted serious concerns about the integrity and security of examinations conducted by NTA. NSUI president Varun Choudhary appealed to the education minister to take immediate and decisive action, including banning the NTA and initiating legal proceedings against its officials. "We have repeatedly pointed out the flaws and vulnerabilities in the examination processes conducted by NTA. The recent compromise of the UGC-NET exam is just one more example of their failure. It is time for the Education Minister to act responsibly and protect students' interests," Varun Choudhary stated.

# Why Did President Murmu Go Against Convention in Asking Modi to Form the Government?



It is a travesty of the time-tested convention - which has the force of law behind it - that Narendra Modi was sworn in as Prime Minister of India without the 240 newly elected Bharatiya Janata Party MPs electing him as its leader and President Droupadi Murmu not asking him to seek a vote of confidence within a stipulated time frame. Murmu invited him to form the government and take oath as PM after Modi was elected as leader of the NDA, of which the BJP is the principal party with 240 Lok Sabha seats, falling short of the majority mark of 272. But the NDA's tally of 293, comprising all the seats won by parties of that alliance, could enable it to go past the strength needed for a majority. Murmu should have ascertained before extending an invitation to Modi if he, apart from being elected leader of the NDA, was elected by the BJP MPs as their leader in the manner that was first done so by the BJP's parliamentary party on May 20, 2014 in the Central Hall of the old parliament building. That time, his name was proposed by L.K. Advani and seconded, among others, by Murli Manohar Joshi, Sushma Swaraj, Venkaiah Naidu, Arun Jaitley and Nitin Gadkari. It is rather inexplicable why the 2014 example of the BJP parliamentary party electing Modi as its leader has been dispensed with in 2024. Someone invited by the president to form the government by taking oath as prime minister must go through the process of being elected the leader of their parliamentary party consisting of the newly elected Lok Sabha MPs of that party. This is a categorical imperative connected with the formation of a government, which is a vital component testifying to the might and majesty of our republic.

The president as head of our republic should have scrupulously adhered to the convention of invit-

ing the leader elected by the concerned legislature party and informed the nation about the rationale behind her decision.

Never Too Late: Droupadi Murmu Must Decide What Kind of President She Wishes To Be

Precedent set by former President Venkataraman

In this respect, President Murmu should have followed the shining example of some of her distinguished predecessors, such as R Venkataraman and KR Narayanan, who issued press communiques detailing the robust reasoning behind their decisions to invite leaders of the parties that could not secure a majority in the Lok Sabha but whose legislature units/alliance partners elected them as leaders with assurances of their support to form a stable government.

Venkataraman wrote about this in his book *My Presidential Years* published in 1994 by Harper Collins.

The results of the 1989 general elections to the ninth Lok Sabha showed that the Congress, led by Rajiv Gandhi, with 400-plus seats in the eighth Lok Sabha, could secure only 194, far below the majority required to form the government, and became the single largest party.

In contrast, the Janata Dal and its allies in the National Front won 145 seats and the BJP 82, and the CPI(M) group got 55. Venkataraman wrote in his memoirs that the Congress parliamentary party in its meeting held in Delhi took a decision not to stake claim to form the government, and the leaders of BJP and Left parties announced that their respective parties would extend support from outside to the VP Singh government.

After due deliberations with several leaders of different political parties regarding the formation of a government, Venkataraman issued a press communique on December 1, 1989 informing the nation of his decision and the reasoning based on which he invited VP Singh to take oath as prime minister.

The relevant paragraph of that

communique as quoted by Venkataraman in his book is self-explanatory:

"Since the Congress (I), elected to the ninth Lok Sabha with the largest membership, has not opted to stake its claim for forming a government, I have invited Sri. V.P. Singh, leader of the second largest party/group, namely Janata Dal/National Front, to form a government and take a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha within 30 days of assuming office."

Venkataraman flagging Singh's status as the leader of the second-largest party/group, namely the Janata Dal/National Front, and asking him to seek a vote of confidence within 30 days of assuming office is of crucial significance.

According to him, some people filed a writ petition in the Karnataka high court challenging the president's decision asking Singh to take a vote of confidence within a stipulated period of 30 days on the grounds that there was no such provision in the constitution for specifying a time frame to prove a majority.

The high court dismissed the plea by stating that the time span prescribed by the president was in tune with well-known conventions.

Why did President Murmu not ask Modi to seek a vote of confidence?

President Murmu's decision to invite Modi to form a government raises several questions in light of the precedent set by Venkataraman. Did she ascertain Modi's status as leader of BJP, the single largest party/the NDA?

The BJP did not get a majority on its own and only as part of the NDA did it cross the majority mark. Therefore, why did she not ask Modi to seek a vote of confidence within a stipulated time period as was done by Venkataraman in the case of V.P. Singh?

In the absence of any press communique issued by her, the people, as the repository of all power and authority in our democratic system, are kept in the dark about the rationale, reasoning and timing behind her decision to invite Modi to form a government.

Precedent set by former President KR Narayanan

When former President KR Narayanan invited Atal Bihari Vajpayee of the BJP to form a government in 1998, he issued a press communique in March that year. Vajpayee's party was the single-largest, and with the support of its NDA alliance partners, it could get a majority. Narayanan, to assure and satisfy himself that a stable government would be formed, insisted that NDA allies should give him letters expressing their support to Vajpayee. While mentioning all such points in his press communique, Narayanan said: "When no party or pre-election alliance of parties is in a clear majority, the Head of State has in India or elsewhere, given the first opportunity to the leader of the party or combination of parties that has won largest number of seats subject to the Prime Ministers so appointed obtaining majority support on the floor of the house within a stipulated time. This procedure is not, however, all time formula because situations can arise where MPs not belonging to the single largest party or combination can, as a collective entity, out-number the single largest claimant. The President's choice of Prime Minister is pivoted on the would be Prime Minister's claim of commanding majority support." It is clear that even Narayanan informed the people and the nation that the leader of a party or combination of parties could be invited for taking oath as prime minister and s/he should be asked to seek a vote of confidence within a stipulated period. Clearly, the precedents and conventions set by Venkataraman and Narayanan have not been followed in letter and spirit by President Murmu when she invited Modi to form a government. She also did not ask him to seek a vote of confidence within a specified time limit, clearly aware of the fact that the BJP did not get a majority of Lok Sabha seats. Such departures from the set convention by President Murmu do not augur well for our democracy and the constitutional scheme of forming a government

# Where Human Lives Are Cheaper Than Instagram Reels

Heat Stroke Death: The heat wave in North India is severe, with temperatures feeling like burning embers. In Uttar Pradesh alone, over 120 lives have been claimed by the heat this year. In Delhi, five people have died in the past 72 hours. While I don't know the circumstances of all heat-related deaths in UP, one incident makes it seem like humanity itself is burning in the scorching heat.

He Was Writhing, GRP Officers Kept Filming

This incident took place at Kanpur Central, one of the five central railway stations in the country. Head Constable Brij Kishore Singh, posted at the police line, had taken a three-day leave and arrived at the station to go home to Jhansi. It was noon, and the heat was intense. As soon as Singh entered the Kanpur Central campus, he felt dizzy

and collapsed. The Government Railway Police (GRP) were informed about Singh lying unconscious. An officer arrived but instead of providing first aid, he pulled out his phone and started filming. When he didn't get the right angle, he filmed from another. During this time, Singh's breaths grew labored. Onlookers reprimanded the officer, who then took Singh to the hospital. By then, it was too late. Singh had succumbed to heat stroke, and perhaps humanity had too. The video circulating on social media is so insensitive that we cannot show it to you. Zee News does not confirm the authenticity of the viral video.

What Hope Do Ordinary Citizens Have?

It seems highly inhumane for one uniformed officer to treat another this way. By filming, what evidence was the GRP

officer trying to gather that he couldn't think to help the suffering policeman? Fortunately, some passengers showed some courage and reminded the officer of his duty. The eyewitnesses must have put themselves in dying BK Singh's place for a moment, feeling a chill even in the intense heat. When one police officer doesn't care about another's life, what hope does an ordinary citizen have?

Humanity Is Not the Duty of One Person Alone!

People on social media are now outraged after seeing this video from Kanpur. Some say those who were filming should be charged with murder. Others believe the officers involved should be suspended. Some are lamenting the state of the world. The truth is, similar comments surface for every such



incident. People portray themselves as morally superior on social media but often are part of the crowd that watches and records the spectacle without helping. Why is that? Is humanity the responsibility of just one person? God forbid, but imagine yourself in the place of that helpless, suffering person, and humanity will manifest in the form of fear.

