

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

BJP's 2nd manifesto for Delhi promises free KG-to-PG education, insurance

NEW DELHI, JAN 21: Former Union Minister and senior BJP leader Anurag Thakur on Tuesday unveiled the second part of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Sankalp Patra (manifesto) for the upcoming Delhi Assembly Elections 2025.

Thakur announced several ambitious schemes, including free education for needy students from kindergarten to postgraduate level in government institutions. The manifesto also promises a financial boost for students preparing for competitive exams like the UPSC Civil Services and State PCS, offering Rs 15,000 for up to two attempts.

Under the Bhimrao Ambedkar Stipend Scheme, students from the Scheduled Caste community pursuing technical courses in ITIs and polytechnic skill centres will receive stipends of Rs 1,000 every month.

The BJP has also proposed the formation of an Auto-Taxi Driver Welfare Board, promising Rs 10 lakh life insurance and Rs 5 lakh accident insurance for drivers. Similarly, a welfare board for domestic workers is on the



cards, with the same insurance benefits.

The former union minister also announced that if voted to power in the national capital, the BJP will form an SIT to investigate the AAP government's irregularities and scams.

Thakur also criticised the AAP government for failing to implement the Jal Jeevan Mission in Delhi, reiterating the BJP's commitment to improving infrastructure

and welfare if voted to power. On January 17, Union Minister and BJP national president JP Nadda released the first part of the party's manifesto.

It included assurances of continuing existing welfare schemes and new promises like a monthly pension of Rs 2,500 for senior citizens aged 60-70 and Rs 3,000 for those above 70.

For women, the party introduced the Matru Surak-

sha Vandana scheme, offering six nutrition kits and Rs 21,000 to every pregnant woman.

The BJP, which last ruled Delhi 27 years ago, has struggled in previous assembly elections, securing only three and eight seats in 2015 and 2020, respectively.

The elections for the 70-member Delhi Assembly will take place on February 5, with results to be declared on February 8.

Vivek Ramaswamy leaves department of govt efficiency, mulls run for Ohio govt

WASHINGTON, JAN 21: Indian American entrepreneur-turned-politician Vivek Ramaswamy on Monday announced that he is leaving the newly-established Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) as he plans to prepare to run for the Governor of Ohio.

"It was my honour to help support the creation of DOGE. I'm confident that Elon & team will succeed in streamlining the government," Ramaswamy, 39, said in a post on X.

Soon after his stunning victory in the November 2024 presidential election, Donald Trump announced to create DOGE and tasked Tesla owner Elon Musk and Ramaswamy to head this new agency.

"I'll have more to say very soon about my future plans in Ohio. Most importantly,



we're all-in to help President Trump make America great again!" Ramaswamy said within hours of Trump being sworn in as the 47th President of the United States Monday noon.

The White House appreciated the role of Ramaswamy in the creation of DOGE.

"Vivek Ramaswamy

played a critical role in helping us create DOGE. He intends to run for elected office soon, which requires him to remain outside of DOGE based on the structure that we announced today," Anna Kelly, a spokesperson of the Trump Team, told PTI.

"We thank him immensely for his contributions over the

last two months and expect him to play a vital role in making America great again!" Kelly said.

Ramaswamy is still mulling on the exact date to formally announce his Ohio Governor run, which is slated to be in 2026.

If elected, he would be the first Indian American Governor of Ohio. So far only three Indian Americans have been elected as a governor of a US State. The first was by Bobby Jindal in Louisiana, followed by Nikki Haley in South Carolina. Both of them are from the Republican party.

His announcement for Ohio governor can come as early as next week. The Indian American had an unsuccessful run during the Republican presidential primary. Later he endorsed Trump and quickly emerged as his close confidant.

Rahul slams govt, says real development is when everyone progresses

NEW DELHI, JAN 21: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday hit out at the Modi government over its economic policies and asserted that real development is when everyone progresses, there is a fair environment for business, a fair tax system and the income of workers increases.

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "The truth of Modi Ji's developed India: Your hard work, whose profit? The wheel of the country's economy is turning with your sweat and blood, but are you getting your fair share in it? Just think."

The share of the manufacturing sector in the economy has gone down to the lowest level in 60 years and due to this, people are struggling for employment, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

Wrong policies in the agriculture sector have worsened the condition of farmers and



farm labourers, Gandhi said, adding they are barely able to make ends meet.

The real income of workers has either remained stagnant or decreased in the last five years, Gandhi said.

"The harmful GST and income tax have made life difficult for the poor and the middle class, while corporate loans are being waived off," the former Congress chief

said. Due to skyrocketing inflation, now not only the poor but also the salaried class is forced to take loans for their needs, he said.

"Real development is when everyone progresses - there is a fair environment for business, there is a fair tax system and the income of workers increases. Only this will make the country prosperous and strong," Gandhi

asserted.

Gandhi on Sunday had announced the launch of a 'White T-shirt Movement,' championing the rights of the masses. He had accused the Narendra Modi government of turning its back on the poor. Gandhi had announced the launch in a post on X and urged people to be a part of it.

"If you believe in economic justice, oppose rising wealth inequalities, fight for social equality, reject all forms of discrimination, and strive for peace and stability in our country, wear your white T-shirts and join the movement," said the video voiceover posted by Gandhi on X.

The Congress has been attacking the government over its handling of the economy, claiming the issues of rising prices, decreasing private investment and stagnating wages are hitting the common people hard.

14 Naxalites killed in encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Gariaband

GARIABAND, JAN 21: At least 14 Naxalites, including a senior cadre, were killed in an encounter with security forces along the Chhattisgarh-Odisha border in Gariaband district, police said on Tuesday.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the Maoists were killed in a joint operation by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), SoG Odisha and Chhattisgarh Police along the inter-state border.

He said that with the resolve for a Naxal-free India and the joint efforts of the security forces, Naxalism is breathing its last today.

"Another mighty blow to Naxalism. Our security forces achieved major success towards building a Naxal-free Bharat. The CRPF, SoG Odisha, and Chhattisgarh Police neutralised 14 Naxalites in a joint operation along the Odisha-Chhattisgarh border," he said in a post on X.

According to the police, two women Naxalites were killed, and a CoBRA jawan was injured in an encounter during the joint operation earlier on Monday.

An official said a fresh exchange of fire took place late on Monday night and early Tuesday morning in a forest



under the Mainpur police station area along the Chhattisgarh-Odisha border, in which 12 more Naxalites were gunned down.

With this, the toll in the operation was at 14, he said. Gariaband Superintendent of Police Nikhil Rakhecha, in a statement, said that of the deceased, one has been identified as Jairam alias Chalpati, a central committee member of Maoist, who was carrying a bounty of Rs 1 crore.

He said the identity of the remaining killed cadres was yet to be ascertained.

The official said intermittent exchange of fire was still underway in the area, and the number of Maoist casual-

ties may increase.

A joint team of security personnel from the District Reserve Guard (DRG), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), CoBRA from Chhattisgarh and Special Operation Group (SOG) from Odisha are involved in the operation, the official said.

He said the operation was launched on the night of January 19 based on intelligence about the presence of Maoists in the Kularighat reserve forest of Chhattisgarh, just 5 km from the border of Odisha's Nuapada district.

Two women Naxalites were neutralised during the operation on Monday, and a large cache of firearms, am-

munition and IEDs, including a self-loading rifle, were recovered from the encounter site, the official said.

Hailing the security forces, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said that under the double-engine government (BJP government at the Centre and the state), Chhattisgarh will get rid of the menace by March 2026.

Strengthening the resolve of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to end Naxalism in the country and state by March 2026, the security forces have been continuously achieving success and moving rapidly towards fulfilling the target, he said.

"This success of the soldiers is commendable. I salute their bravery", Sai said.

With this encounter, 40 Naxalites have been killed in separate encounters in the state so far this year.

On January 16, twelve Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Bijapur district. Later, Maoists, in a statement, admitted that 18 cadres were killed in the January 16 gunfight.

Last year, 219 Naxalites were neutralised by security forces in separate encounters in the state.

Traffic restrictions due to R-Day rehearsal in Delhi lead to woes for commuters

NEW DELHI, JAN 21: Vehicular movement was severely hit in Central Delhi on Tuesday due to the Republic Day parade rehearsals leaving hundreds of commuters stranded on the road.

Routes leading to Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg near the ITO, arterial roads of the Ring Road, between Ashram and IP Estate flyover, Man Singh Road, Rafi Marg, Janpath Road, Shahjahan Road, Akbar Road, Ashoka Road and other routes around the Kartavya Path were severely hit.

Posting a picture of the heavy traffic near Kartavya Path, a user on X said, "Is it too much to ask @dtpttraffic to manage traffic? The entire central Delhi is choked."

Some users reported that they were late for work or didn't want to go to work due to Delhi roads being jam-packed.

"Don't feel like going out for work. The traffic in Delhi is horrible," another user on X said.

Motorists blamed traffic personnel for not regulating traffic properly and said that there was no proper information about the traffic diversions.

A user who shared a picture of online maps said, "All the roads leading to Central Delhi are fully jammed. People had to wait more than one hour on the road to reach their destination."

Rajat Kumar who commutes daily to his office in his car said, "Usually I start in the early morning to reach



my office on time. But today it was a completely different situation. I got stuck in traffic for more than two hours. I had to inform my seniors that I would be late for work."

He further said that security has also been increased due to Republic Day with the traffic police conducting vehicle inspections at every checkpoint which adds to the congestion.

The snarls persisted despite the traffic police issuing an advisory on January 15, notifying the public about road closures in central Delhi.

According to the advisory, the Delhi Police has made

special traffic arrangements to facilitate the uninterrupted movement of Republic Day parade rehearsals on the Kartavya Path.

The special arrangements have been made for January 17, 18, 20, and 21, it read.

Heavy traffic congestion was also reported in several parts of south Delhi. One of the commuters posted on social media that they were stuck in a traffic jam on MB Road for two hours.

Some commuters who opted for the metro complained of long queues at the stations due to heightened security checks ahead of Republic Day.

A user posted a video on X showing a long queue at the metro station and said, "Delhi metro please we can't afford it in that peak time, please. We are using Delhi metro to avoid traffic. This is the peak hour to travel for a corporate life. We all know that 26th January (Republic Day) is near but we can't afford it in that time. @OfficialDMRC."

The Delhi Police had earlier issued a traffic advisory and stated that special traffic arrangements were made for four days in order to facilitate the uninterrupted movement of the Parade on Kartavyapath.

96 women in fray for Feb 5 Delhi Assembly polls

NEW DELHI, JAN 21: Of the 699 candidates in the fray for the February 5 Delhi assembly elections, 96 are women as parties jockey to woo women voters to win the polls.

Five years earlier, 76 of the 672 candidates were women.

Among three key political parties in the elections, the BJP and AAP have fielded nine female candidates each whereas the Congress has seven women nominees. All three parties have fielded more women candidates this time than the 2020 Assembly polls.

The prominent women candidates from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) include Chief Minister Atishi, Pooja Balyan, Pramila Tokas, and Rakhi Bidlani. Besides Atishi, it has renominated Rakhi Bidlani, Pramila



Tokas, Dhanwanti Chandela, Bandana Kumar, and Sarita Singh.

New faces for AAP this

time include Anjana Parcha and Pooja Balyan, the wife of MLA Naresh Balyan, who is contesting from Uttam

Nagar. Naresh Balyan was recently arrested for his alleged links to gangster Kapil Sangwan.

Among the BJP's women nominees, the prominent are Rekha Gupta, Poonam Sharma, Shikha Rai, and Priyanka Gautam. Of the Congress' seven female candidates, the key nominees include Alka Lamba, Ariba Khan, Ragini Nayak, and Aruna Kumari.

A total of 981 candidates had filed their papers during the week-long nomination window, which commenced on January 10. The final count was determined after scrutiny on January 18, followed by the last date for withdrawal on January 20.

The elections will be held on February 5 and the results will be declared on February 8.