

The scion of the Gandhi family addressed a 5,000-strong gathering at Gujarat College on Friday

# Rahul thanks Guj for Mahatma

DNA Correspondent

The young face of the Congress, Rahul Gandhi made an impressive political debut in Gujarat with a public rally at the Gujarat College grounds on Friday afternoon. The young Gandhi, the party's trump card against the BJP's Narendra Modi, was quite unlike his opponent. He was serene, unassuming and candid all along.

Contrary to expectations of Modi-bashing, Gandhi thanked Gujarat for giving the country a great leader like Mahatma Gandhi. He said that often when he was not taken seriously in political circles and passed off as a 'kid', he referred to the Mahatma's books to find a way through bad times.

The Gujarat College grounds remained chock-a-block with Congress workers from across the state. The crowd, it seemed, had gathered more so to unravel the mystery surrounding the Gandhi scion.

Rahul distributed awards to some youths of the state who had marked their presence at the national and international level. He also presented awards to 10 young Gujaratis, the winners of a sports competition held by the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) under the Abhay Udan Programme. First-class cricketer Neeraj Patel, singer Parthiv Gohil, chess champion Ankit Rajpara and Naishad Shah, who stood first in the CA examinations, were among those awarded on Friday.



Dhanraj Bhatnagar/DNA

Crowds gathered to catch a glimpse of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi at Gandhi Ashram on Friday

## GANDHI FEVER

Addressing the crowd gathered, he said India had stood on its own. Touching on the issue of terrorism, he said the country had nothing to fear from anyone. Gandhi took an oath along with the crowd and Congress workers to serve the country and fight terrorism to make India safe for everyone to live in.

In an unexpected development, Rahul broke schedule to pay homage to the statue of Vinod Kinariwala, a young student of Gujarat College who was shot dead by the British during the Quit India Movement. Leader of the opposition in the Gujarat assembly, Shaktish Gohil, and GPCC president Siddharth Patel also addressed the crowd.

## Youth Cong leaders stumped

DNA Correspondent

The leaders of the Gujarat Youth Congress were hit under the belt on Friday as few were able to provide satisfactory replies to the questions posed by Rahul Gandhi at a meeting held at the office of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee.

The meeting was held after Gandhi addressed a rally at the Gujarat College grounds. Breaking the ice, Gandhi asked those present to not follow protocol and speak freely without hesitation. During the meeting, he made an observation that politics had become the main focus of the

Youth Congress, replacing social issues. A source present at the meeting said, "He asked the leaders about social issues in Gujarat. However, they went blank and were unable to give a proper reply."

Instead, the leaders of the Youth Congress began complaining about being neglected during allocation of tickets for the elections, the source said. "After that, Rahul Gandhi asked them to focus on building up the image of the party, and said that all would have to work and reach out to the public. He also laid emphasis on increasing the membership of the Youth Congress," the source said.

## When Gandhi 'met' Gandhi

Jumana Shah

Rahul Gandhi's first ever visit to the Sabarmati Ashram on Bapu's death anniversary on Friday was an enlightening experience for him, but an embarrassing one for senior state Congress leaders.

It was with immense interest that he undertook a swift tour of Hriday Kunj at Gandhi Ashram, asking numerous questions and showing particular interest in the Khadi-making Charkha. He interacted with the managing trustee of the ashram, Amrut Modi, and Gandhian scholar Tridip Sushruth about the history and present status of the ashram.

He also briefly tried his hand at the charkha. Incidentally, since it was Martyr's Day, visitors thronged the ashram, and Rahul, in his archetypal style, throwing caution to the wind and palpitations to the special protection group, went ahead to interact with the crowds.

However, resurfacing the famous Congress ineptitudes, it so turned out, that senior Congress leaders were not permitted to interact with Rahul. These included Narehari Amruti, Amrut Modi, Chinnibhai Vaidya and Sushruth. The SPG refused to let them close to the Hriday Kunj, leaving Congress leaders with no option but to rush for some last-minute damage control. The situation was eventually eased after GPCC president Siddharth Patel rushed to the spot and signed the necessary documents.

The young scion was very intrigued by the ashram, its simplicity and peace. Although those interacting with him were impressed by his keenness on finding out all about the ashram, some questions were scraping even the basics about Bapu and the ashram, facts which one expects Rahul to know.

## Wrong queries

Those around were impressed by Rahul's keenness, but they expected him to know at least the basic facts about the Mahatma



## ANOTHER GANDHI TAKES TO THE CHARKHA

Dhaval Bharwad/DNA



### 'Thank you Guj for Gandhi'

The young face of the Congress, Rahul Gandhi, made an impressive political debut in Gujarat with a public rally at the Gujarat College grounds on Friday. Instead of Modi-bashing, Gandhi thanked Gujarat for giving the country the Mahatma. P5

### Youth Cong dumbfounded

The leaders of the Gujarat Youth Congress went blank when Rahul Gandhi asked them about the social issues in Gujarat during a meeting held at the office of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee.

DETAILED COVERAGE ON P5

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Rahul Gandhi visited Gandhi Ashram, NID and Gujarat College on Friday



Pankaj Shukla/DNA

## Rahul, NIDians exchange views over lunch

DNA Correspondent

In an unexpected turn of events, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi visited the National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad, at Paldi soon after he landed in the city at noon on Friday. He spent

nearly three hours at the institute, ate lunch with the students and faculty members, and interacted at length with them about issues plaguing the country, the status of education in India and ways to improve it, and lastly, the image of politicians and how it can be improved.

During lunch, Rahul Gandhi was informal, candid and unassuming. To the students, he came across as a very unassuming and honest person.

"He is not naive, as he is made out to be; though he is indeed young and youthful. He wants to bring about a change in the country and the system. We realise and so does he, that he cannot do it alone. But we, as youngsters, really appreciate that at least he is brave enough to try to make a difference," said a student who interacted with him after lunch.

The conversation flowed

freely and was more like a discussion and debate.

"To begin with, everyone was in awe of Rahul Gandhi. But when he started talking, he came across as such a friendly person. He has no aura around him of being extraordinary. He was diplomatic but relaxed, which dissolved our reservations and we were able to speak to him. He connects with people very well and fast," another student said.



## GUJARAT RELOADED

## A G-chat &amp; designers for company

Kumar Anand  
AHMEDABAD

Rahul Gandhi Spends Four Hours At National Institute Of Design Campus

IT WAS a much-awaited G-Talk at the NID. Peppered with cynicism about politicians, education system, and of course, full of design. The young Gandhi was facing Gen Y at the National Institute of Design (NID) campus. And the future designers could even get a promise from the young man from that informal chit chat.

Rahul Gandhi's visit to the premier institute was a last-minute addition to his itinerary in Ahmedabad. It, however, lasted for full four hours — a hearty lunch and a visit to every nook and corner of the campus. He finally walked away with his hands full of gifts, needless to say designed by the NID students for someone whom they found "a good human being, who is very down to earth."

Interacting with the NID community at the institute's open amphitheatre, Rahul talked about himself and the Gandhi family, asked questions in order to understand students' take on politics, opposition parties, media, education among other things. Talking about his father, the late Rajiv Gandhi, he said although his father had no time for his children after becoming PM, they understood that well.

"I have not joined politics reluctantly, but I am here by choice. I firmed up plans to join politics only after my father was



killed," a student quoted him as saying. Of course, he did not agree when students termed politics as dirty and self-serving, and tried to dispel this by saying "not all politicians were alike".

"Why aren't politicians better qualified?" asked a student, upon which he said even an uneducated man was better qual-

ified when it came to politics.

"When it came to asking questions, he came across as the one always eager to learn new things. Although he did not ask students to join politics as others do, he quizzed them a great deal on design, education system, and other aspects.

"He accepted that the present system

needed a change and also assured that change was on the way," said a student.

"I asked him what he could do for design, an area yet to get into the mainstream, day-to-day life, and he assured to take up our case when his party would come to power," said senior NID professor, MP Ranjan.

## Rahul rallies around young cadres

Our Bureau  
AHMEDABAD

ON A whirlwind tour of Ahmedabad for the first time since the declaration of the Lok Sabha polls, Rahul Gandhi charmed the youth, but failed to draw the desired numbers. Almost half of the Gujarat College ground, the venue of the high-profile 'Abhay Udan Mera Bharat Mahan', was empty.

While Gandhi spent his day with young cadres of the Congress, trying to rejuvenate them before the crucial polls, the meeting turned to be a damper as not many turned out to hear him speak.

Referred to as "immature" by seasoned politicians, the young leader said, "People doubt my standing as a political leader. They believe I am too young for politics and even refer to me as a 'kid'.

while the second one that was practiced by Mahatma Gandhi, is meant to liberate people from fear and install a sense of self-confidence among them. It is unfortunate that people are being made to fight among themselves and differences are created through the use of fear. Unlike certain political parties that follow the ideology of dividing the masses, Congress believes in 'joining and binding'."

Stirred by a question popped to him by a NID student, he admitted during his speech, "I was asked 'why are modern day politicians so inaccessible?', the answer to which I believe is because no amount of radio, television, internet would help one to reach out to the masses unless there is a personal touch to the communication. Gandhiji used to write 100 letters daily just to remain in touch with people."

He paid tributes to the Mahatma at

Economic Times - 31/1/09



# Speaks the language of politics at NID

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

AHMEDABAD, JANUARY 30

In a surprise move, Congress General Secretary Rahul Gandhi, on Friday, visited the National Institute of Design (NID) and had an informal interaction with the students for around two hours besides having lunch with them in the mess.

Replying to the students' queries about how and why he entered politics, and about his views on politicians, he exhorted the youths at the premier design institute to come forward and join politics to bring about a change in the country.

NID learnt about Rahul's visit only a day ago.

The students found Rahul frank during their interaction with him. Pankaj, a student of strategic designing at the institute, said: "During a one-to-one interaction with me, he spoke about the national education scenario and how design can play a vital role in the development of the country."

While answering to the question whether the decision to join politics was his own or it was forced upon him, Rahul reportedly said it was his choice made under the influence and vision of his father Rajiv Gandhi.

Rahul also initiated a discussion with the students on why people didn't trust politicians. The students told him about the gap that existed between what people expected from politicians and what they delivered.

At the end of his discussion with the students, Rahul urged the young generation to come forward and join politics to bring about the needed change. Replying to a question as to why educational status cannot be made a qualifying criterion for candidates contesting the elections, Rahul said, education was a matter of opportunity and in a democratic set up all were equal. He said a less educated person might understand the people better.

## What NID students want from Rahul

During the interaction Rahul Gandhi asked the students what they would like him to do for the Institute. Reminding him that the



country's premier design institute was conceptual-

ized by his great grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru, they requested him to make NID a centre of excellence. "We told him that we do not have a status of Centre of Excellence like the IITs and the IIMs. Due to this we cannot give doctorate degrees. We have requested him to do the needful to make NID a Centre of Excellence," said a student.

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