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Rahul Gandhi hits out at BJP's 'perverted logic' behind calling tribals 'vanvasis'

The Wayanad MP said that the BJP "insults" the tribal community by calling them "Vanvasi" instead of Adivasi and snatches away their forest land to hand it over to industrialists.

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File photo of Congress MP Rahul Gandhi. (PTI photo)



Press Trust of India
Wayanad, UPDATED: Aug 13, 2023 14:58 IST

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday accused the ruling BJP at the Centre of attempting to restrict the tribal communities to the jungles and deny their status as original owners of the land by calling them "Vanvasi" instead of 'Adivasi'.

The Wayanad MP reiterated the issue which he had raised a few days ago in Rajasthan while addressing a party rally where he had said that the BJP "insults" the tribal community by calling them "Vanvasi" instead of Adivasi and snatches away their forest land to hand it over to industrialists.

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Today, after inaugurating the HT Connection at Dr Ambedkar District Memorial Cancer Centre at Nalloorad in Mananthavady area of Wayanad district of the state, Gandhi alleged that there was a "perverted logic" behind calling tribals as vanvasis.

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"It is to deny that you (tribals) are the original owners of the land and also restrict you to the jungle.



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"The idea is that you belong in the jungle and should not leave the jungle," he said.

The Congress leader said that this ideology was not acceptable to his party as the word vanvasi was a "distortion" of the history and traditions of the tribal communities and an "attack" on their relationship with the country.

"For us (Congress) you are Adivasi, the original owners of the land," he said.

Gandhi further said that since Adivasis are the original owners of the land, they should be given rights to the land and forests and "be allowed to have an imagination to do whatever they want".

They should be given all the opportunities, to education, jobs, professions, etc, that is given to everyone else in the country.

"You (tribals) should not be restricted or categorised. The entire planet should be open to you," he said.

Gandhi said that the word Adivasi means a particular wisdom, an understanding of the environment of the earth we live on and a relationship with the planet.

He also said that the words 'environment' and 'environment protection' have become fashionable now after modern society burned down forests and caused pollution.

However, Adivasis have been talking of protecting the environment for thousands of years. "So we have a lot to learn from you," he said.

Regarding the cancer centre, the Congress leader said he hoped that the new electricity connection would resolve the problems faced by doctors and patients due to the frequent power cuts in the area.

He said he was happy to provide Rs 50 lakh from the MPLADS fund for the same and added that the hospital will get an additional Rs 5 crore as a result of the good work done by the officials of the district.

"I am confident it would be used productively," he said.

At the event he also mooted the idea of having mobile breast cancer screening units which can go to homes and screen women for the disease.

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He suggested the idea saying that he came to know that a lot of women here were being diagnosed with breast cancer.

"Having mobile screening units will help us catch the disease early and save their lives," he said.

Later in the evening today, he would be travelling to Kozhikode district to lay the foundation stone of the Community Disability Management Center (CDMC) at St. Joseph High School Auditorium in Kodenchery there.

After that, around 10.30 PM, he is scheduled to depart for Delhi from Calicut International airport.

Gandhi arrived in Kerala on Saturday for a two-day visit, his first after being reinstated as the MP of Wayanad.

Edited By: Manisha Pandey

Published On: Aug 13, 2023

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