



# **CONGRESS**

---

# **WILL**

---

# **DELIVER**



**MANIFESTO**  
**LOK SABHA ELECTIONS 2019**  
**INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**



*"I've never broken a promise that I've made."*

Rahul Gandhi

# Contents

---

## pg 4 Foreword by Rahul Gandhi

Every single word in the Congress manifesto reflects your voices and the aspirations of crores of Indians.

---

## pg 6 The choice before you

The 2019 elections are crucial for India's future and our children's future.

---

## pg 10 Detailed plan of action

Kaam, Daam, Shaan, Sushasan, Swabhimaan, Samman.

### pg 11 KAAM—EMPLOYMENT AND GROWTH

- 12 Jobs
- 13 Industry
- 14 Infrastructure
- 14 Cities, Urbanisation and Urban Policy
- 15 Rural Development
- 15 Informal and Unorganised Sector

34 Local Self Governments

35 Judiciary

36 Review of Laws, Rules and Regulations

37 Electoral Reforms

37 Police Reforms

38 Media and Freedom of The Media

38 Perspective Planning and The New Planning Commission

### 16 DAAM—AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR ALL

- 17 Agriculture, Farmers and Farm Labour
- 18 Economic Policy
- 20 Minimum Income Support Programme or Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY)
- 21 Taxation and Tax Reforms
- 23 Banking and Financial Sector
- 24 Science, Technology and Innovation
- 24 Fisheries and Fisherfolk

### 39 SWABHIMAAN—SELF-ESTEEM FOR THE DEPRIVED

- 40 Women's Empowerment and Gender Justice
- 40 Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes
- 41 Jammu & Kashmir
- 42 North Eastern States
- 43 Religious and Linguistic Minorities
- 44 Denotified Tribes and Semi-Nomadic Tribes
- 44 Senior Citizens
- 44 Persons with Disabilities
- 45 Rights of LGBTQIA+

### 25 SHAAN—PRIDE IN OUR HARD AND SOFT POWER

- 26 National Security
- 26 Internal Security
- 27 Foreign Policy
- 28 Border Security
- 28 Ex-Servicemen
- 29 Central Armed Police Forces
- 29 Art, Culture and Heritage
- 30 Tourism
- 30 Non-Resident Indians
- 31 Engaging With Citizens and Civil Society

### 46 SAMMAN—A LIFE OF DIGNITY FOR ALL

- 47 Healthcare
- 48 Education
- 49 Food and Nutrition Security
- 50 Child Welfare
- 50 Water Management, Sanitation and Hygiene
- 51 Environment and Climate Change
- 52 Climate Resilience and Disaster Management
- 53 Digital Rights of Every Citizen
- 53 Sports

### 32 SUSHASAN—GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH INDEPENDENT AND ACCOUNTABLE INSTITUTIONS

- 33 Institutions
- 33 Anti-Corruption
- 33 Governance, Transparency and Accountability
- 34 Federalism and Centre-State Relations

---

## pg 54 Appeal

Let us rebuild India. Together, let us get India moving again.

# Foreword by Rahul Gandhi



**121** PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

**24** STATES AND **3** UNION TERRITORIES IN OVER **60** LOCATIONS

**12** COUNTRIES FROM WHERE NRIs WERE REPRESENTED

Elections 2019 present a stark choice to the people of India.

Will India be a free and democratic country and will the Indian people be free from fear, free to live and work and pray and eat and love and marry according to their wishes, free from poverty and free to pursue their ambitions? Or will India be governed by a pernicious ideology that will trample upon people's rights, institutions, conventions and the healthy differences that are the essence of a multi-cultural country?

Will India be able to lift all our people with the tide of growth and will it get rid of poverty or will India become a country marked by gross inequalities of income, wealth and power?

The last 5 years have been disastrous for the people of India. Youth have lost jobs. Farmers have lost hope. Traders have lost business. Micro, small and medium enterprises have lost their confidence. Women have lost a sense of security. Deprived communities have lost their traditional rights. Institutions have lost independence.

The hardest blow is that our citizens have lost their faith in the words of the Prime Minister and his Government. He has given us only grandiose promises, empty slogans, failed programmes, false statistics and an overall climate of fear, intimidation and hatred.

In this time of deep crisis, the Indian National Congress promises a clean break from the past 5 years. With this manifesto, the Congress offers to you the only national alternative: a distinct alternative that is unwavering in its commitment to truth, freedom, dignity, self-respect and prosperity for our people. We promise to make India strong and united, and a just and prosperous society.

Our manifesto process reflects our commitment to a higher vision, that of listening to the Jan Awaaz. It is not the 'mann ki baat' of one individual but the collective voice of lakhs of people.

We have used all possible tools—website, WhatsApp, email, online petitions, and meetings with citizens, experts, stakeholders and grassroots activists. Between October 2018 and February 2019, many of you engaged in a conversation with the Congress, in at least 16 languages, through the medium most easily available to you. Our Manifesto Committee organised 121 consultations with the public and 53 consultations with experts such as farmers, entrepreneurs, economists, students, teachers, women's groups, doctors, lawyers and many others. We held consultations in over 60 locations across 24 States and 3 Union Territories. We also met with NRI representatives from over 12 countries.

I have personally been listening to our people's voices from all corners of our country. Every single word in the Congress manifesto reflects your voices and the aspirations of crores of Indians. It is an action plan for the future of India. You inspired this manifesto. It is a living manifesto. Now, it needs your support and your vote.

We will present a report to the people of India, every year, on the status of implementation of our manifesto. We will also set up an independent social audit group, which will make its own assessment of how and to what extent we have fulfilled our promises.

**This is our commitment.  
Congress promises.  
Congress delivers.**

**Rahul Gandhi**  
President, Indian National Congress

# The Choice Before You





- The 2019 general elections will be held during Mahatma Gandhi's 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary year. This reminds us that these elections are mainly between 2 ideologies. On the one hand is the Indian National Congress which has worked tirelessly to "wipe every tear from every eye," while building a strong, harmonious, prosperous and modern India. On the other hand is the ideology of the RSS and its affiliates, which is working to destroy the very idea of India that the Mahatma gave his life for.

Over the last 5 years of the BJP government, India has suffered under the 'Modi model,' which has devastated our economy, impoverished our farmers, destroyed jobs, divided communities, stoked hatred and spread fear. It is a model that has stripped the average Indian of dignity, voice and trust. This is not the model India deserves. This is a model that all Indians must reject.

The Congress model is in stark contrast to the BJP model. The Congress has always provided transformative development, inclusive growth, responsive

governance and reforms that strengthen the foundations of our Republic.

The 2019 elections are crucial for India's future and our children's future. The choices before our citizens are crystal clear.

- Do we choose freedom or fear?
- Do we choose harmony or hatred?
- Do we choose inclusion or exclusion?
- Do we choose dignity or oppression?
- Do we choose prosperity for all or wealth for a few?
- Do we choose results or jumlas?
- Do we choose justice or injustice?

Our allies and other progressive political parties across the country recognise the importance of this moment. We have, therefore, come together to defeat the BJP-led coalition and set our nation on the right course. In this Manifesto, we present to you the only national alternative—the Indian National Congress.

## Why Congress Again?

Our record speaks for itself. We have delivered prosperity for the people of India before. We will do it again!

Ahead of us lies an electoral battle that will decide the fate of our nation for decades to come. India faced many such grave challenges before. The Indian National Congress has been at the forefront of many such battles, and India has always triumphed.

Congress led and won India's struggle for freedom. We established and nurtured parliamentary democracy. We led India to adopt a visionary Constitution that ushered in peaceful socio-economic transformation, established institutions that safeguarded our Republic, and provided the nation its moral compass that has stood the test of time. On the other hand, under the BJP government, every independent institution has suffered an unprecedented loss of credibility. Congress will restore India's faith in our institutions and Constitution. We have done it before. We will do it again!

Congress built a modern India marked by prosperity and productivity. We built the IITs, IIMs, AIIMSS, CSIR institutions and laboratories, and educational and scientific research institutions that harnessed the brilliance of Indian minds and talent. Congress ushered in the Green Revolution and the White Revolution that transformed lives in rural India. We built the public sector that was the foundation upon which industrialisation and technological progress reached commanding heights. We made India a nuclear and space power. We led the Electronics and Telecom Revolutions and made India a global leader in Information Technology.

On the other hand, the BJP government has ensured that farm prices are at a 10-year low, credit growth is at a 20-year low and unemployment is at a

45-year high. Exports and investment are at historical lows, projects are stalling at an increasing rate, and factory closures have led to a stagnating manufacturing sector. Digital India, Startup India and Make in India have been colossal failures. Petrol, diesel and gas prices have sky-rocketed. Consumers are in despair and have lost confidence in the government. Farmers are under extreme stress and have lost hope. An aspirational India has become a desperate India. Congress will once again bring India on track to be among the leading economies of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We have delivered before. We will do it again!

Congress launched liberalisation and economic reforms. It is the Congress that created India's successful middle class and the new entrepreneurial class. It is the Congress that passed rights-based legislation and created a social safety net for the very poor. It is the Congress-led UPA government that lifted an unprecedented 14 crore Indians out of poverty between 2004 and 2014.

On the other hand, Mr. Modi, arbitrarily and single-handedly, devastated India's economy through demonetisation. It cost the people of India at least Rs. 4 lakh crores in lost output, lakhs of jobs and greater indebtedness. Then, a poorly designed GST was implemented in a hasty and careless manner, with rules being changed haphazardly almost every day. Arbitrary powers given to authorities brought back the 'Inspector Raj.' Tax terrorism has crushed the animal spirits of our entrepreneurs. Together, these moves have destroyed the lives and livelihoods of farmers, traders, small business owners and workers in the unorganised sector. Congress will ensure that the excesses and mistakes of the past 5 years are reversed. We will usher in an economy that works for all and we will ensure that no one is left behind. We have delivered before. We will do it again! ••••

*Do we choose inclusion or exclusion?  
Do we choose prosperity for all  
or wealth for a few?  
Do we choose results or jumlas?  
Do we choose justice or injustice?*

..... Inspired by the slogan 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan,' the Congress government led India to victory in the 1965 war with Pakistan. In 1971, we decisively defeated Pakistan and liberated Bangladesh. We crushed secessionist forces, healed differences, and ensured the unity and integration of our people. Congress leaders Mahatma Gandhi, Smt. Indira Gandhi, Shri Rajiv Gandhi and Shri Beant Singh made the ultimate sacrifice for India.

On the other hand, the BJP Government's policies have been based on the whim of one man, sidelining the Ministry of External Affairs and the entire diplomatic corps. The BJP Government is solely responsible for cancelling the gains made under the UPA years, the widening of fault lines, the total alienation of the people of Jammu & Kashmir, and a worsening of the security situation in that State. Pseudo-nationalism is on the rise and the success of the armed forces is politicised. The BJP Government's political boasts have come even as the defence budget, as a percentage of GDP, has been reduced to its lowest levels in 50 years. The Congress will once again restore the pride of our armed forces, insulate them from politics, entrust the conduct of foreign policy to professional diplomats and strengthen India's hard power.

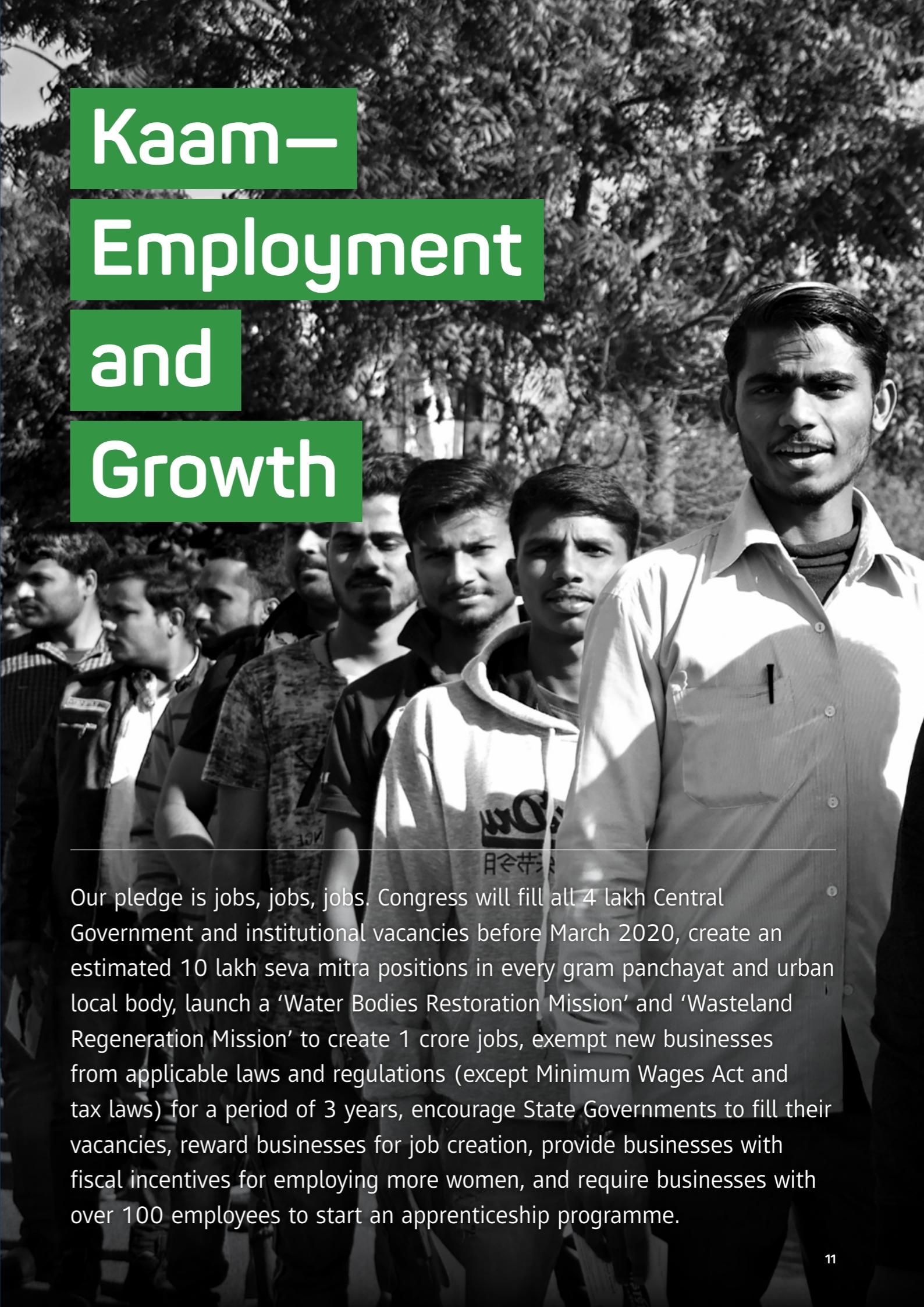
**We have delivered before. We will do it again!**

---



# Detailed Plan of Action

Kaam—  
Employment  
and  
Growth



Our pledge is jobs, jobs, jobs. Congress will fill all 4 lakh Central Government and institutional vacancies before March 2020, create an estimated 10 lakh seva mitra positions in every gram panchayat and urban local body, launch a 'Water Bodies Restoration Mission' and 'Wasteland Regeneration Mission' to create 1 crore jobs, exempt new businesses from applicable laws and regulations (except Minimum Wages Act and tax laws) for a period of 3 years, encourage State Governments to fill their vacancies, reward businesses for job creation, provide businesses with fiscal incentives for employing more women, and require businesses with over 100 employees to start an apprenticeship programme.

## 01 Jobs

Unemployment is the gravest challenge to the country and job creation is the highest priority for the economy. In the last 5 years, there has been a dramatic rise in unemployment. Today, unemployment is touching a 45-year high of 6.1 per cent according to the government's own figures. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy puts the number at 7.2 per cent. At the end of this February, 3.1 crore people were actively looking for jobs. Data indicates that total employment has declined, the labour participation rate has declined and existing jobs have been destroyed. Every section of society has been affected by growing unemployment and the destruction of existing jobs: youth, families, women, small business persons, traders, farmers, daily-wage workers and agricultural labourers.

01. Congress pledges to give the **highest priority** to protecting existing **jobs** and creating new jobs.
02. In order to underline the link between the growth of the industry and services sectors and rapid creation of jobs, Congress will create a **new Ministry of Industry, Services and Employment**.
03. All of the **4 lakh vacancies** as on 1 April 2019 in the Central **Government**, Central Public Sector Enterprises, Judiciary and Parliament **will be filled** before the end of March 2020. As a condition for devolution of funds to the healthcare and education sectors and to Panchayats and Municipalities, Congress will request State Governments to fill all vacancies, estimated at 20 lakh, in the 2 sectors and in local bodies.
04. We will work with State Governments to create **new Seva Mitra positions** (estimated at 10 lakh) in every Gram Panchayat and every Urban Local Body to ensure the effective delivery of government services to citizens.
05. **Application fees** for government examinations and government posts will be **abolished**.
06. Congress pledges to create lakhs of new jobs for qualified teachers, doctors, nurses, paramedics, technicians, instructors and administrators through a massive **expansion of the education and health** sectors.
07. **Para-state workers** such as Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, rozgarsahayaks, preraks, and anude-shaks, form the backbone of the public service delivery system. We will increase funding for the relevant programmes and work with State Governments to ensure that all arrears are paid immediately. We will also work with State Governments and attempt to address all pending contentious issues regarding their salaries and work conditions. In addition, we will expand the **ASHA programme** and appoint a second ASHA worker in all villages with a population exceeding 2500 persons.
08. We will trigger rapid **growth of the manufacturing sector**, particularly of MSMEs, through the provision of world-class infrastructure in industrial hubs and cluster towns in order to aid the expansion of current units and the creation of new units.

09. MSMEs account for 90 per cent of all employment outside agriculture. The definition of MSMEs based on capital employed is biased against labour. Congress will **link the definition of MSME to employment**. A business employing 10 persons or less will be 'micro,' between 11 and 100 will be 'small,' and between 101 and 500 will be 'medium.'
10. We will create an **Enterprise Support Agency** to help entrepreneurs, including start-ups, with all-round business support including counselling, incubation, access to technology, funding, domestic and export markets, and the creation of new products, services and intellectual property.
11. We promise **regulatory forbearance** for Micro and Small Enterprises. They will be exempt from all applicable laws and regulations (except the Minimum Wages Act and tax laws) for a period of 3 years from 1 April 2019 or, in the case of new businesses, the date of commencement of business. This means freedom from 'Inspector Raj' until they stabilise.
12. Congress will promote '**Mass Entrepreneurship**' and support entrepreneurs to replicate tried and tested models of businesses in order to meet the growing demand for such goods and services.
13. The main job-creating sectors are construction, textiles, leather, gems & jewellery, entertainment, tourism and retail businesses. We will **reward businesses that create new jobs** by lowering the effective direct tax rates and by lowering contributions to the CSR fund.
14. We will provide **fiscal incentives** to businesses that employ a certain percentage of **women**.
15. Exports create jobs. We will reward **export-oriented industries** through tax rebates and incentives.
16. Tourism creates jobs. Congress promises an adequately capitalised **Tourism Development Bank** to provide low-cost, long-term funds for investment in tourism-related businesses. We will also offer **lower rates of corporate and personal income tax** on tourism-related business income.

17. We recognise the need to create lakhs of **low-skilled jobs** in order to absorb young men and women who have completed only a few years in school. Congress will launch 2 major programmes to be implemented through Gram Sabhas and urban local bodies that will create 1 crore jobs:
  - a. Repair and restoration of water bodies ('**Water Bodies Restoration Mission**'); and
  - b. Regeneration and afforestation of wasteland and degraded land ('**Wasteland Regeneration Mission**').
18. Congress will require businesses employing 100 persons or more to start an **apprenticeship**

**programme**, impart skills, pay a stipend, and employ from among the trained apprentices whenever a job is created or becomes vacant in that business. We will amend The Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Rules, 2014 to include 'Apprenticeship' as an additional activity.

19. We will identify new kinds of jobs that will emerge with the advent of new technologies and will offer opportunities to youth to **acquire the skill-sets** necessary for these jobs.

## 02 Industry

Congress initiated liberalisation in 1991 with a new Industrial Policy. Taking note of the changes in the global economy and the Indian economy, Congress promises another radical, forward-looking Industrial Policy.

The BJP Government mouths empty slogans. Its record is dismal in terms of the growth rate of Industry sector GVA and gross capital formation in the Industry sector. Congress promises to reverse these disappointing trends.

01. Congress promises to increase the **share of India's manufacturing sector** from the current level of 16 per cent of GDP to **25 per cent** within a period of 5 years and to make India a manufacturing hub for the world. Congress believes that anything that can be made in another country can be made in India. Congress promises that it will adopt policies, formulate rules, levy taxes and reward entrepreneurship that will make India a renowned centre of manufacturing.
02. Congress will work with State Governments to set up **New Industrial Towns** with the required infrastructure and turn them into manufacturing hubs for a variety of industrial products.
03. We will announce policies that will help India **retain its leading position** in the manufacture of engineering goods, petroleum products, gems & jewellery, drugs & pharmaceuticals, garments & textiles and chemicals.
04. We will announce policies that will help India **gain a leadership position** in steel, metals, cement, machinery, electronic goods, computer hardware, automobiles etc.
05. Congress will announce a '**Make for the World**' **policy** under which foreign and Indian companies will be invited to invest in '**Exclusive Export-only Zones**', manufacture and export their entire production, pay no indirect taxes and pay a low rate of corporate tax.
06. As the UPA did from 2004 to 2014, we will make a determined effort to **revive stalled projects** and bring locked-up capital to use and generate employment.
07. We will promote the manufacture and export of India's **traditional products** like handloom products and handicrafts that employ lakhs of persons.
08. Congress will acquire **patents**, create a patent pool and make advanced technologies available to small and medium businesses.
09. Controls have crept into the system in the name of regulations. Congress promises to do a quick **review of the rules and regulations** made by the BJP Government in the last 5 years and repeal as many of them as are necessary to free industry and business from the 'Control Raj.'
10. In the last 5 years, tax authorities have been given extraordinary discretionary powers that have throttled industry and come to be described as '**tax terrorism**.' Investigative agencies have misinterpreted the laws and have instilled fear among businesspersons. Congress will **review these discretionary powers** and arbitrary actions and take steps to allow industry and business to function with a large degree of freedom.

## 03 Infrastructure

A basic weakness of the Indian economy has been infrastructure. Flawed design, inefficient execution, insufficient capacity and poor maintenance of infrastructure have dragged India's growth rate down.

Congress promises to address these deficiencies with a combination of planning, technology, quality and accountability.

All available models and instrumentalities will be used to build infrastructure—public sector, private sector and public-private partnership.

Roads, railway and electricity are among vital infrastructure. They are also crucial public goods.

01. Congress promises to **augment the total length of national highways** and increase the pace of construction. The focus will be on improved design and quality, maintenance and accountability.
02. Congress promises to massively **modernise all outdated railway infrastructure**. New projects will be implemented in accordance with the best international standards of design and quality.
03. Road construction and railways can be built using private capital and capacity. Congress will use sector-specific, tried and tested **PPP models** to increase the supply of these vital public goods.
04. Congress promises to review, re-formulate and implement the **policy on spectrum and on exploration and extraction of natural resources**. The policy will address issues of allocation, capital

investment, enhanced production, transparency, efficiency, risk-reward concerns, environmental sustainability, inter-generational equity, accountability, competition and appropriate sectoral regulation.

05. We will formulate a policy on **Clean Energy** in existing power plants that use fossil fuels and promote **Green Energy** to enhance the share of solar and wind energy in the total supply of energy.
06. Congress promises to enhance availability of, and access to, **electricity in rural areas** by encouraging investment in **off-grid renewable power** generation with ownership and revenues vesting in local bodies. Every village and every home will be electrified in the true sense. In the long term, we aim to substitute LPG used in homes by electricity and solar energy.

## 04 Cities, Urbanisation and Urban Policy

India is fast urbanising. Nearly 34 per cent of our population lives in towns and cities and the number is growing. As in the rest of the world, India's cities can become engines of growth.

The Smart Cities Mission of the BJP government, which replaced the successful JNNURM, was a colossal failure and a waste of money with no visible results.

01. Congress promises to formulate a **comprehensive policy on Urbanisation** after wide consultation. We will address the issues concerning towns and cities including city governance, livelihoods, housing, habitat, pollution, climate change, urban transport and disaster management.
02. Congress will support State Governments to **build new towns and cities** as well as satellite towns.
03. Congress will introduce a new model of governance for towns and cities through a **directly elected mayor** with a fixed term of 5 years, an elected Council and a **separate administrative structure** for each urban body. The administration will be accountable to the Mayor and the Council and there will be a provision to recruit technical experts and build capacity as well as multi-disciplinary teams

- to do urban planning and implement municipal works.
04. We will **enforce the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment** to the Constitution and ensure the devolution of powers, functions and funds to the Municipalities and Corporations, making them financially independent.
05. Congress promises the **Right to Housing for the urban poor** and protection from arbitrary eviction. We will build night shelters for the homeless so that no one will sleep in the open.
06. Congress will launch a **Slum Upgradation and Transformation Scheme** to ensure basic services such as drinking water, electricity and sanitation to slum dwellers. Slums will be transformed by replacing huts and kuchha dwellings with proper houses, roads and other public facilities.

07. Public spaces, public transport, public premises and other public facilities in towns and **cities** will be made **safe** for women, children, persons with disabilities, migrants and marginalised sections of society. More women will be appointed to government and municipal jobs in towns and cities.

08. Congress promises to formulate and implement a **policy on urban transport** with emphasis on metro rail, suburban rail, electric vehicles, public bus transport, hired vehicles and shared vehicles. We will encourage non-motorised transport, namely, walking and cycling.

## 05 Rural Development

Congress promises to enhance infrastructure in rural areas and improve the quality of public goods such as roads, bridges, water supply, sanitation, electricity and schools.

01. In order to fill the gaps in sector-specific schemes as well correct any unintended bias, we will **empower Panchayats and Municipalities** to design and execute infrastructure projects. Congress promises to establish a non-lapsable **Rural Infrastructure Fund** that will provide loans and grants to specific infrastructure projects undertaken by Panchayats and Municipalities.
02. We will **launch MGNREGA 3.0** to address issues of water security, soil quality and similar issues that aggravate farmers' distress. To this end, we will:
  - a. Increase the guaranteed days of employment up to 150 days in cases where 100 days have been achieved in a block/district;
  - b. Use MGNREGA labour in the Waterbodies Restoration Mission and the Wasteland Regeneration Mission; and

- c. Use MGNREGA funds to build public assets such as primary health centres, classrooms, libraries etc.
03. Congress promises to connect all villages and habitations with a population of 250 with a road under the **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana**. Broadband connectivity will be provided to all village Panchayats by the year 2021.
04. The allocation to the **National Drinking Water Mission** that has suffered neglect under the BJP government will be increased.
05. We will pass the **Right to Homestead Act** to provide a homestead for every household that does not own a home or own land on which a house may be built.

## 06 Informal and Unorganised Sector

Congress promises a fair deal for the crores of workers and the self-employed who toil every day in the unorganised and informal sector.

01. We will encourage and **support micro and small enterprises** that collectivise unorganised sector workers including waste pickers and scrap collectors.
02. Congress will ensure that notified **minimum wages** are paid to workers in the unorganised sector.
03. Congress will **ratify ILO Convention 87** (Freedom of Association) and **ILO Convention 98** (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining).
04. The **Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014** will be implemented in letter and spirit.
05. Congress will guarantee **portability for the ration card** possessed by a migrant worker and right to access ration articles at the place of work.



# Daam— An Economy That Works

## For All

To ensure that no Indian is left behind, Congress will provide a Minimum Income Support Programme (MISP) or Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY) under which Rs. 72,000 a year will be transferred to the poorest 20 per cent families in India. We will provide special respite to farmers and farm workers, not just through “Karz Maafi” or a loan waiver but by setting farmers on the path to “Karz Mukti,” or Freedom from Indebtedness.

## 07 Agriculture, Farmers and Farm Labour

Many years ago, Jawaharlal Nehru said, ‘Everything can wait but not agriculture.’

In the last 5 years, under the BJP Government, the agriculture sector has been driven into deep crisis. Adequate MSP was denied for 4 years; the procurement machinery was non-existent or weak; debt of farmers mounted; prices of inputs increased steadily; credit was inadequate; demonetisation devastated the cash-based agricultural economy; co-operative credit societies and apex co-operative banks were denied the right to convert their deposits, thereby choking co-operative credit to the farmer; the terms of trade moved decisively against agriculture; the crop insurance scheme robbed the farmer and enriched the insurance companies; and with little or no support from the government farmers and farm labourers were left to fend for themselves.

Congress has heard the cry of anguish of farmers and feels the pain of their acute distress.

01. Immediately after forming the governments in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, as promised, the 3 Congress Governments waived the loans of farmers. Congress promises to **wave the outstanding farm loans** in other States as well.
02. We will not stop with just providing “Karz Maafi” or a loan waiver. Through a combination of remunerative prices, lower input costs, and assured access to institutional credit, we will set our Kisans on the path to “**Karz Mukti**,” or **Freedom from Indebtedness**.
03. **Debt is a civil liability** and we will not allow criminal proceedings to be instituted against a farmer who is unable to pay his/her debt.
04. In order to ensure priority to the issues affecting the agriculture sector, we will present a **separate “Kisan Budget.”**
05. Congress promises to establish a permanent **National Commission on Agricultural Development and Planning** consisting of farmers, agricultural scientists and agricultural economists to examine and advise the government on how to make agriculture viable, competitive and remunerative. The recommendations of the Commission shall be ordinarily binding on the government. The Commission will subsume the existing Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices and recommend appropriate minimum support prices.
06. Congress also promises to establish a **Commission on Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labour** to advise on policies and programmes that will help them earn income from higher wages and from non-crop based agriculture such as horticulture and floriculture, dairying and poultry.
07. We will completely re-design the BJP government’s failed **Fasal Bima Yojana (Crop Insurance Scheme)** that has only enriched the insurance companies at the cost of the farmers. We will direct insurance companies to offer crop insurance and charge premiums on the principle of ‘no profit, no loss.’
08. Congress promises to work with State Governments to digitise land ownership and land tenancy records and, in particular, **recognise ownership and tenancy rights of women farmers** and ensure women get the benefits of agriculture-related schemes.
09. Congress will promote **Farmer Producer Companies/Organisations** to enable farmers to access inputs, technology and markets.
10. We will review the **prices of agricultural inputs**, extend **subsidies** where necessary, and establish facilities to hire farm machinery.
11. Congress will repeal the **Agricultural Produce Market Committees Act** and make trade in agricultural produce—including exports and inter-state trade—free from all restrictions.
12. We will **establish farmers’ markets** with adequate infrastructure and support in large villages and small towns to enable the farmer to bring his/her produce and freely market the same.
13. Congress will formulate a **policy on export and import** of agricultural products that will support farmers and Farmer Producer Companies/Organisations and enhance their income.
14. Congress promises to formulate a policy to enable the construction of modern **warehouses**, cold storage and **food processing facilities** in every block of the country.
15. We will revive, strengthen and improve the old system of **Agricultural Extension Services’** and bring the best knowledge and best practices to every agricultural holding in the country.
16. Congress will encourage farmers to diversify into the production of local varieties of **millets** and pulses that can be procured for the PDS, Mid-Day Meals Scheme and the ICDS programme.
17. Congress promises a major programme to promote **horticulture, pisciculture and sericulture** for diversification and greater income for farmers. We will launch a national project to double the value of production in 5 years in **dairying and poultry**.

- 18. Congress will promote **organic farming**, encourage farmers to use mixed fertilizers and pesticides, support verification of organic products, and help them secure better prices for organic products.
- 19. Congress promises to **double the funding** in 5 years for **teaching, R&D**, agriculture-related pure sciences and applied science and technology in the agricultural sector. We will establish a College of Agriculture and a College of Veterinary Sciences in every district of the country.
- 20. Congress promises that the distortions that have crept into the text and the implementation of the **Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act**, 2013 and **the Forest Rights Act**, 2006 will be removed and the original purposes of the Acts restored and enforced.



## 08 Economic Policy

India is a developing country aspiring to be a middle-income country by the year 2030. Wealth creation and the welfare of our people are our 2 principal goals.

Congress economic philosophy is based on embracing the idea of an open and liberal market economy, creation of wealth, sustainable development, reduction of inequalities and assurance of welfare of all sections of the people. Such growth will be driven by the private sector and a viable public sector and underpinned by a robust system of social security.

Our economy is still over-regulated. Structural problems remain. Government control and bureaucratic interference are aplenty. Regulators have morphed into controllers. There is growing interference by the courts in economic policies. The BJP Government has reversed the clock of reforms. Congress promises to undo these distortions and restore an open, liberal market economy.

- 21. The **Essential Commodities Act**, 1955 belongs to the age of controls. Congress promises to replace the Act by an enabling law that can be invoked only in the case of emergencies.
- 22. Building on past experience, Congress will **re-design MGNREGA** and provide for:
  - a. Increasing the guaranteed days of employment up to 150 days in cases where 100 days have been achieved in a block/district;
  - b. Use of labour in the Waterbodies Restoration and the Wasteland Regeneration Missions;
  - c. Building village-level assets such as primary health centres, classrooms, libraries etc.

- 01. **Fiscal stability** is the starting point. Congress promises to reverse the BJP Government's fiddling with the target of fiscal deficit. Congress promises to achieve the target of 3 per cent of GDP by 2020-21 and remain under that limit. The revenue deficit will be contained, as far as possible, under 1 per cent of GDP. Off-Budget and extra-Budget borrowings will be faithfully reported with the justification for such debt and the means of servicing and repaying such debt.
- 02. **Monetary policy** is the province of the Reserve Bank of India. Congress promises to reverse the unwarranted and illegal interference by the BJP government into the functioning of the RBI. Congress will respect the **autonomy of the RBI** in matters reserved to the RBI under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1939, including the formulation of monetary policy. However, the Governor shall periodically render an account to a committee of Parliament. Congress promises that the government will work closely with the RBI to ensure that fiscal policy and monetary policy are aligned to achieve the common goal of growth with price stability.
- 03. Sustained economic growth is the path toward creating wealth. Millions of people produce goods and services and they must have a large degree of freedom, unfettered by excessive regulations. Congress will provide a **conducive policy climate** that will recognise the contributions of the private sector and the public sector, promote entrepreneurship, encourage innovation, and employ advanced technology and reward risk-taking.
- 04. We are the party that first declared the criticality of **high and sustained economic growth** measured by GDP. Congress reiterates its firm belief in a high rate of growth of GDP. Hence, the 4 drivers of economic growth are important and the Congress wishes to state its position on each of these:
  - a. **Private Investment:** In an open, market economy, the private sector must play the lead role in identifying opportunities, mobilising resources, adopting advanced technology, producing goods and services, and securing domestic and foreign markets. Congress promises to extend full support to the private sector and to revive the animal spirits of our entrepreneurs.
  - b. **Government Expenditure:** Government expenditure must play a lead role in the creation and provision of public goods. Congress promises adequate expenditure on roads, railways, waterways, drinking water, sanitation, healthcare, education, national and internal security.
  - c. **Domestic Consumption:** In a developing country, rise in consumption is a sign of healthy economic growth. It is important that the poorer sections of our people consume more. Supply of goods and services must be abundant and prices must be reasonably stable. Congress will repose faith in the trading community and create a policy environment that will encourage domestic consumption.
- d. **Exports:** No country has achieved high economic growth without high growth of exports. An example is India during the Congress period from 2004 to 2014. Congress will adopt a policy on foreign trade that will ensure that exports become, once again, a key driver of economic growth.
- 05. Congress promises to encourage **saving**, especially household saving, through suitable rewards for savers. Savings provide the resources for investment. Our goal will be to achieve a savings level of 40 per cent of GDP and a Gross Capital Formation level of 35 per cent of GDP. We will work with banks and insurance companies to introduce simple financial products for households.
- 06. **Foreign Direct Investment** (FDI) plays a crucial part in development. FDI will be welcomed in all sectors, subject to exceptions on the ground of national security. Rules and regulations will be minimal. FDI will be accorded national treatment and there will be a level playing field for foreign and domestic investors. There will be no expropriation and no retrospective taxation.
- 07. **Investments** have to be prudently distributed among the different sectors—agriculture and allied activities, industry, and services with special emphasis on education and healthcare. Congress believes in the crucial role played by market in allocation of resources. Where it is absolutely necessary, there will be policy intervention to prevent misallocation of resources.
- 08. Congress promises to **review all laws, rules and regulations** governing investments within 3 months. Instruments that are inconsistent with a market economy or outdated or obstructionist will be repealed.
- 09. **Foreign Trade Policy** will be reviewed and restated within 3 months. Exports and imports shall be free and consistent with WTO rules. Any instrument that has the effect of altering this guiding principle will be supported by sufficient justification and its operation will be limited to a sunset date.
- 10. Every sector of the economy needs credit. A robust and healthy banking system, supplemented by non-banking finance companies, is critical to delivery of credit. While the RBI is the regulator of banks and NBFCs, the government has the responsibility to ensure that there is adequate liquidity, cash in circulation and flow of credit. The BJP Government denied **adequate credit** to MSMEs, agriculture, trade and exports. They created the

NPA scare that brought lending to a virtual halt. A one-size-fits-all approach drove companies into insolvency. Demonetisation shut out all sources of informal credit. The result is that the agriculture sector is in acute distress, MSMEs are shut or struggling to survive, trade is paralysed, and the volume of merchandise exports was flat for 4 years. Congress promises to reverse these gross distortions and, working closely with the RBI, re-start the process of credit delivery and **ensure sufficient liquidity** and cash in circulation.

11. India must increase the **share of manufacturing** from the current level of 16 per cent to **25 per cent** in a period of 5 years. Congress believes that anything that can be made in another country can be made in India. Congress promises that it will adopt policies, formulate rules, levy taxes and reward entrepreneurship that will make India a global hub of manufacturing.
12. Congress recognises that business—be it manufacturing or supply or trade or exports—runs best on predictable and stable laws, protection of property rights and sanctity of contracts. Congress promises to enact and enforce a comprehensive **Law on Doing Business** in India that will incorporate the best business practices and rules.
13. We will endeavor to bring every **Fortune 500 company** to set up a business in India.
14. Congress promises to encourage and incentivise starting of new businesses. The **Angel Tax** imposed on Start-Ups will be **withdrawn** completely. We will make India an innovation hub.
15. MSMEs were badly hit by demonetisation and a flawed GST. Congress promises to devise a **rehabilitation plan for MSMEs** that were severely affected and help them revive and grow.

16. Congress promises to **disinvest** from non-core, non-strategic central public sector enterprises.
17. Congress promises good and competent **governance**. The capacity of the traditional bureaucracy to deliver on our economic goals has been inadequate. We promise to induct into the administration good economic policy makers and managers and give them a large degree of autonomy to design and implement policies that will advance the economic goals of the government.
18. Unless we are vigilant, government has a tendency to interfere with markets as well as re-acquire control over trade, industry and business. Government has a role in an open and liberal market economy and it is worthwhile to state the Congress position on the **role of government**:
  - a. We must get government out of gratuitous interventions in the market;
  - b. We must get government into addressing notable market failures through regulation (e.g. capital market, banking, etc.); and
  - c. We must build capacity in government to do the things it must do (e.g. taxation, delivery of public goods and services, etc.)
19. Congress is conscious that while much has been achieved since liberalisation in 1991, there is much more to be done. Between 2004 and 2014, 14 crore people were lifted out of **poverty**. That task has to be continued with renewed vigour. Congress promises that between 2019 and 2024, another 10 crore people will be lifted out of poverty and the ground will be prepared to wipe out poverty—and ensure that no one is left behind—by 2030.

01. Congress believes that the size of India's GDP and the level of Total Expenditure (Central and State Governments) allow us to undertake an ambitious programme of cash transfer to the poorest sections of the people without in anyway affecting the goal of fiscal prudence. The main features of the **Minimum Income Support Programme (MISP) or Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY)** will be:
  - a. The **target population** will be **5 crore families** who constitute the poorest 20 per cent of all families. They will be the beneficiaries of MISP or NYAY;
  - b. Each family will be guaranteed a cash transfer of **Rs. 72,000 a year**;
  - c. As far as possible, the money will be transferred to **the account of a woman** of the family who has a bank account or who will be urged to open a bank account;
  - d. There will be a Design phase (3 months) followed by a Pilot and Testing phase (6–9 months) before roll-out;
- e. The rollout will be implemented in phases;
- f. The estimated cost will be <1 per cent of GDP in Year 1 and <2 per cent of GDP in Year 2 and thereafter.
- g. As the nominal GDP grows and families move out of poverty, the cost will decline as a proportion of GDP.
02. Congress will appoint an **independent panel of eminent economists**, social scientists and statisticians to oversee the design, testing, roll-out and implementation of the programme. The programme will move from one stage to the other only after a 'go ahead' from the panel. Congress intends to implement NYAY as a **joint scheme of the Central and State Governments**. The scheme will be funded through new revenues and rationalisation of expenditure. Current merit subsidy schemes that are intended to achieve specific objectives will be continued.
03. The Congress goal is that '**No Indian Family Shall Be Left Behind**'.

**To eliminate abject poverty by 2030, Congress will introduce Nyuntam Aay Yojana to provide Rs. 72,000 a year to the poorest 20 per cent families in India.**

## 09 Minimum Income Support Programme or Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY)

The abolition of poverty remains the foremost goal of the Congress. We recall with pride that the Congress-led UPA government lifted 14 crore people out of poverty between 2004 and 2014.

It is true that rapid and broad-based growth will reduce poverty and, in the medium to long term, eliminate poverty. On the other hand, decisive and focused intervention has the capacity to eliminate poverty within a decade. Congress, therefore, sets the goal of elimination of abject poverty by the year 2030.

## 10 Taxation and Tax Reforms

The 2 major taxes that will be the backbone of the economy are Income Tax and Goods and Services Tax. Congress reiterates its firm belief that the principles underlying these taxes should be simplicity, transparency and progressivity. Besides, a good tax administration must place trust in, and enjoy the trust of, taxpayers. Congress will put an end to the tax terrorism unleashed by the BJP government that has put uncertainty and fear in the minds of individuals and businesses.

### Direct Taxes Code

01. Congress promises to enact the **Direct Taxes Code** in the first year of our government. It will usher in an era of simplicity, transparency, tax equity, easy compliance and impartial administration.
02. Congress promises that the Direct Taxes Code will levy taxes at **reasonable and progressive rates** having regard to the level of current incomes, income inequalities and the principles of tax equity.



#### Goods & Services Tax 2.0

01. Congress promises to review and replace the current GST laws with the **GST 2.0** regime that will truly reflect the intent and purpose of a non-cascading, value-added, indirect tax.
02. The GST 2.0 regime will be based on a **single, moderate, standard rate of tax** on all goods and services. The rate will be revenue neutral to the current indirect tax revenues of the Central and State Governments and will take note of the potential of GST 2.0 to boost their tax revenues.
03. The GST 2.0 regime will levy a special rate of duty on **demerit goods**.
04. GST 2.0 will be easy to administer, **easy to understand** by the taxpayer, and easy to comply with. We are confident that GST 2.0 will promote growth, new businesses and employment. The website under GST 2.0 will be re-designed and made user-friendly with inputs from the taxpayers.
05. Congress promises that **Real Estate (all sectors), Petroleum Products, Tobacco and Liquor** will be brought within the ambit of GST 2.0 in a manner and time period not exceeding 2 years agreed to in the GST Council.
06. **Essential goods** of mass consumption (such as food grains, lifesaving drugs, vaccines, etc.) and essential services will be **exempted** from GST 2.0 or zero-rated.
07. All goods and services that are **exported** will be **zero-rated** and not subject to GST 2.0.
08. Congress promises that **threshold exemption** for small businesses will not be affected by inter-state supply of goods or services.
09. In order to support small, unregistered businesses that supply goods and services, there will be **no GST liability on the purchaser** through the reverse charge mechanism.
10. Congress promises to **abolish the e-way bill**. Tax evasion will be detected through the risk management mechanism and strengthening the intelligence machinery.
11. Congress will endeavor to **allocate a share** of GST revenues to **Panchayats and Municipalities**.
12. Congress promises that a taxpayer will be required to file a **simple, single quarterly return** for his/her business and an annual return. Every tax payer will be subject to assessment by a single authority based upon turnover.
13. The **GST Council** will be the policy-making body and will be served by a permanent secretariat of tax economists, tax policy experts and tax professionals. Its minutes will be put in the public domain.
14. Congress promises that the **DTC and GST 2.0** will be essentially **civil laws** and any violations will attract civil penalties that will be proportionate to the tax evaded. Prosecution under DTC and GST 2.0 will be only in cases of criminal conspiracy or corruption or fraud.

## 11 Banking and Financial Sector

Congress affirms its belief in a competitive banking and financial sector.

The BJP government has considerably weakened the banking sector in the last 5 years; there has been a sharp rise in non-performing assets; crony capitalism has thrived; and deserving sectors and individuals have been denied credit. Congress promises to reverse these developments.

01. Congress promises a comprehensive review of the concept, role and functions of **Public Sector Banks (PSBs)** in order to make PSBs robust and competitive with healthy balance sheets.
02. Congress will **amalgamate** 2 or more **PSBs** so that there will be only 6-8 PSBs with a national presence and reach. Each of the amalgamated PSBs will be adequately capitalised.
03. We will undertake a comprehensive **review** of the **governance structure of PSBs** and implement changes to make the PSB an independent commercial banking organisation that is competitive, healthy, efficient and profitable. We will abolish the redundant Banking Board Bureau.
04. Congress promises that PSBs will continue to implement policies to serve the larger public interest including **lending to priority and other disadvantaged sectors** that are denied adequate credit.
05. We are concerned by the recent failure of some **NBFCs** that has affected the bond market, mutual funds and the flow of credit. Congress promises to review and strengthen the regulatory regime of NBFCs in order to prevent such failures and to restore investor confidence.
06. We will take the necessary policy and administrative measures to develop a robust, deep and liquid corporate **bond market**, municipal bond market and **infrastructure investment trusts**.
07. Congress promises to promote **new Development Banks** in order to provide long-term credit to development and infrastructure projects.
08. Indian-owned new technology companies face a stiff capital barrier when they are poised to scale-up to global size and standards. Congress will set up an **India Global Companies Fund** and create a policy environment to support Indian-owned companies to become global companies.
09. Congress will encourage the establishment of State-level and Regional-level institutions, including small banks, to provide **bank credit to MSMEs**. Congress will also encourage State Governments to revive State Financial Corporations to provide long-term credit and risk capital to MSMEs.
10. We will strengthen and technologically-enable **Regional Rural Banks and Banking Correspondents** to accelerate financial inclusion so that citizens are provided banking services in their neighbourhood.
11. Congress will work with the RBI to simplify the **KYC process**, avoid repetitive verification, and use a wider range of documents for the purpose.
12. Congress promises to take necessary measures to develop a deep and broad **securities market** that will offer products that will attract more investors to the securities market, give them safe and adequate returns and offer investment solutions to their long term needs.
13. We will adopt policies to attract more **investment**—Indian and foreign—in our financial markets.
14. We promise to take hard measures to **prevent fraud** in the banking, securities and financial markets (including money collection schemes) and deliver swift and deterrent punishment to offenders.

**Congress will encourage the establishment of State-level and Regional-level institutions, including small banks, to provide bank credit to MSMEs.**

## 12 Science, Technology and Innovation

Investment in science, technology and innovation is an investment in the future of the country. Development of scientific temper and inculcating a spirit of inquiry are critical for India's progress.

01. Congress promises to work with industry to increase the **expenditure on science and technology** to **2 per cent** of GDP.
02. Congress promises to allocate sufficient **funds** to promote science, technology and innovation.
03. Congress promises to recruit more scientists to the various institutes of research and development and to fill all current **vacancies** in the posts of researchers and scientists within 12 months.
04. We will **strengthen Science Departments** in NAAC-graded colleges and universities, provide them funds for equipment, laboratories and more teachers, and encourage them to publish their research.
05. Congress promises to strengthen **patent laws** and support Indian inventors and innovators to secure international patent protection.
06. We will create a **patent pool**, acquire patents and allow access to patented technology to businesses at affordable cost.
07. We will revitalise the **National Innovation Council** and make it the premier body to formulate, debate, analyse and implement strategies for innovation and for the deployment of innovative technologies in different areas.
08. We will establish a **National Mission focused on sunrise technologies** such as Big Data, Machine Learning, Internet of Things, 3-D Printing and Manufacturing, and Knowledge Networks.
09. Congress promises to enhance the **India Inclusive Innovation Fund** to provide funds to innovative enterprises to scale-up and expand their operations as well as engage with persons at the bottom of the economic pyramid in order to promote innovation at the grassroots.
10. Congress will set up a **Scenario Planning and Strategic Futures Office** to look at medium-to-long term strategic opportunities and risks for the country as an aid to informed policy making.
11. Congress promises to set up a **National Data Science Institute** with adequate funding and human resources to train and produce world-class Data Scientists.

## 13 Fisheries and Fisherfolk

Over 140 lakh Indians depend, directly or indirectly, on fishing as a source of livelihood. Congress is committed to faster growth of the fisheries industry.

01. Congress will establish a separate **Ministry of Fisheries and Welfare of Fisherfolk**.
02. We will constitute a **National Fisherfolk Commission** to promote fishing and the welfare of fisherfolk. It will address indebtedness and appropriate funding mechanisms for fishing.
03. Congress promises to **recognise inland fishing and aquaculture** as 'agriculture' and extend to them all the benefits available to agriculture.
04. Congress promises to establish a **permanent mechanism with neighbouring countries**, e.g. Sri Lanka and Pakistan, to resolve problems faced by fisherfolk and to eliminate conflict, violence, coercive action and loss of lives, and to improve the livelihood opportunities of the fishing community.



Congress will reverse the trend of declining defence spending under the NDA government, and will ensure that defence spending is increased to meet the requirements of the Armed Forces. We will expedite all modernisation programmes of the Armed Forces in a transparent manner, categorically address any remaining anomalies in one-rank one-pension for our Armed Forces, and improve social security, education and health facilities for our Paramilitary Forces and families.

## 14 National Security

National security is dependent on a sound defence policy, a sound foreign policy and wise leadership. National security is not enhanced by chest-thumping or exaggerated claims.

01. Congress will reverse the trend of declining defence spending under the NDA government, and will ensure that **defence spending** is increased to meet the requirements of the Armed Forces. We will expedite all **modernisation** programmes of the armed forces in a transparent manner.
02. Congress promises to take strategic and hard measures to defend the **territorial integrity** of India and ensure the safety of our people.
03. The concept of national security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has expanded beyond defence of the territory to include **data security, cyber security, financial security, communication security** and security of trade routes. Congress promises to evolve suitable policies to address each of these subjects.
04. Congress will establish the office of **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)** to be the principal adviser to the Government on matters relating to defence.
05. Congress will provide a statutory basis to the **National Security Council (NSC)** and the

**Office of National Security Adviser (NSA).** Their powers and functions will be defined under the law and both authorities, and the agencies under them, will be accountable to Parliament.

06. The BJP government left the **National Security Advisory Board** in limbo between January 2015 and October 2016 and then truncated the body. Congress will re-establish the NSAB, provide a statutory basis to the body, appoint experts from different disciplines and ensure that it will function as a permanent, professional advisory body advising the NSC and the government.
07. Congress promises to rapidly expand **domestic capacity to manufacture** defence and security equipment. We will create manufacturing capacities in the public sector and in pre-qualified, security-cleared private sector companies.

## 15 Internal Security

Congress promises that it will keep a vigilant eye on the security situation and take every measure that is required to maintain law and order and to provide a sense of security for every citizen and for every visitor to India.

01. The key to internal security is intelligence, analysis and quick response. Congress had put in place the Multi-Agency Centre and the NSG regional hubs. Congress had also proposed to establish the **National Counter-Terrorism Centre and NATGRID**. The BJP government dismantled the preparatory work and wasted 5 years. NCTC was put in the cold storage and NATGRID is yet to be made operational. Congress promises that NCTC will be set up within 3 months and NATGRID will be made operational by December 2019.
02. The most serious threats to internal security emanate from (1) **terrorism**, (2) **infiltration of militants**, (3) **Maoism or Naxalism** and (4) **caste or communal violence**. Congress believes that each of these threats deserves a separate and distinct response.
  - a. We promise an uncompromising approach and hard measures to put an end to terrorism and to the infiltration of militants.
  - b. In the case of Maoism, the Congress will resolutely fight violent activities. At the same time, Congress will address developmental challenges in the areas concerned, enlist the support

of the people and win over the Maoist cadres.

- c. In the case of caste or communal violence, Congress will put down such violence with a firm hand using the police forces at its command, apprehend the instigators and bring them to justice. There will be no room for self-appointed vigilante groups and moral policing brigades.
03. Congress will work with State Governments to increase the strength of **State police forces**, fill all vacancies, equip and train them, and deploy them impartially to maintain law and order and to detect and punish violators and instigators.
04. Congress promises to take strong action with respect to **crimes against women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minorities**. The law will be applied on the perpetrators without fear or favour. They will not be allowed to walk on the streets with a sense of impunity.
05. Congress will hold the **District Administration** responsible for riots, caste or communal violence, large scale crimes against women, and for the widespread breakdown of law and order.

## 16 Foreign Policy

India's foreign policy was profoundly influenced by the freedom movement and was developed through the collective wisdom of far-sighted leaders. Unfortunately, foreign policy under the BJP has been reduced to the whim of one man, has become transactional and has been marked by outrageous flip-flops. Our national interest has been the casualty. We promise to reverse these damaging developments and restore faith in our diplomatic corps to advise on, formulate and conduct foreign policy.

01. Congress affirms its firm belief in the continued relevance of the policy of friendship, peaceful co-existence, **non-alignment**, independence of thought and action, and increased bilateral engagement in its relations with other countries of the world.
02. Congress promises to establish a **National Council on Foreign Policy** consisting of members of the Cabinet Committee on Security, scholars, domain experts and diplomats to advise the Government on matters concerning foreign policy.
03. We will work closely with all countries of the world, and particularly India's **neighbours and the G-20 countries**, in various multi-lateral forums and institutions.
04. **Foreign Trade** will be an important element of our foreign policy and we promise to make every effort to significantly increase trade with other countries.
05. It was a Congress government that opened India's economy to other countries of the world. Congress promises to strengthen its relations with other countries through enhanced **economic co-operation**, two-way investments and closer relations between businesspersons.
06. Congress is implacably opposed to **terrorism** anywhere in the world and promises to work with other countries to eliminate terrorist groups, terrorist acts and cross-border terrorism. We will persuade the United Nations to constantly review the list of terrorists and to expand the scope of sanctions.
07. Congress will take determined steps to persuade other countries to compel **Pakistan** to verifiably end its support to the terrorist groups that it shelters.
08. Congress promises to pass a **Law on Asylum** consistent with international treaties and conventions.
09. We will re-double the efforts to win for permanent membership India in the **UN Security Council** and the **Nuclear Suppliers Group**.
10. Congress will work with **SAARC and ASEAN** countries to enhance the volume of trade, investments, tourism and cultural exchanges and reap the benefits of geographical proximity.
11. Congress promises to establish effective mechanisms with neighbouring countries, especially Sri Lanka and Pakistan, to resolve the problems faced by **fishermen**, to eliminate conflict, coercive action and loss of lives, and to improve livelihood opportunities for our fishing communities.
12. We will strengthen the **Indian Council of Cultural Relations**, expand its engagement with other countries and encourage the Council to increase the projection of India's soft power globally.
13. Congress promises to increase significantly the size of the **Foreign Service**, induct domain experts and scholars, open more missions abroad, participate more effectively in international organisations, leverage our growing economy and acquire a position of leadership in the world.

**Congress is implacably opposed to terrorism anywhere in the world and promises to eliminate terrorist groups, terrorist acts and cross-border terrorism.**

## 17 Border Security

India's borders must be secure. Secure borders protect the sovereignty and integrity of India.

Congress promises to enhance border security by undertaking a number of measures.

**01.** We will increase the **strength of border guarding forces**—BSF, SSB, ITBP and Assam Rifles—and post them on or close to the border to prevent infiltration, illegal immigration and smuggling.

**02.** We will construct modern, well-equipped **Integrated Border Outposts** to provide good working and living conditions for the forces. The distance between 2 border outposts will be reduced. The period of posting in high altitude border outposts will be reduced to 3 months at a time.

**03.** We will accelerate the construction of **border roads** along all borders of India, especially, the India-China border. We will enhance the capacity of the Border Roads Organisation and create separate divisions to build roads along the India-China and the India-Myanmar borders.

## 18 Ex-Servicemen

**01.** Under the UPA Governments, Congress accepted the principle of **One Rank One Pension** (OROP) and took 3 steps in 2006, 2010 and 2013 towards implementing the same. In February 2014, the UPA Government decided to close the gap for all retirees in all ranks. Ex-servicemen believe that the BJP Government has not implemented OROP to their satisfaction. Congress promises to remove the anomalies in the implementation of OROP.

**02.** Congress promises to formulate and implement a policy of **compensation to the families of martyrs** that will include full pay and allowances, funding children's education, a government job for a member of the martyr's family and suitable monetary compensation.

**03.** Congress will formulate and implement a policy that will allow Armed Forces personnel, who retire after a period of colour service or earlier,

**lateral entry** into the civil services based on their qualifications.

**04.** We will also allow Armed Forces personnel who retire before the age of 40 years to enter the **Central Armed Police Forces** at suitable levels based on their qualifications and physical fitness.

**05.** Congress promises to substantially expand the capacity of the **Armed Forces medical corps and hospitals** to cater to the needs of ex-servicemen and their families.

**06.** Congress will revise the procedure to determine the **disability of injured armed forces** personnel and make the determination final subject to an appeal only at the instance of the disabled person. All pending appeals filed by the Ministry of Defence will be withdrawn.

***Congress promises to substantially expand the capacity of the Armed Forces medical corps and hospitals to cater to the needs of ex-servicemen and their families.***

## 19 Central Armed Police Forces

The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) are our first line of defence at our borders. They are also the force of choice when there is a breakdown of law and order. Thousands of jawans have sacrificed their lives in the discharge of their duties. Congress promises to enhance the capabilities of the force and to improve the welfare of our jawans.

**01.** We will increase the **strength of the CAPFs** to meet the growing requirements of border security and internal security

**02.** At any given time, an adequate number of battalions will be on **rest, recuperation and training** and will not be deployed on operational duties.

**03.** Congress promises to ensure increased **representation of women** to achieve a minimum of 33 per cent in the force strength of CISF, CRPF and BSF. Every effort will be made to induct more women into the other border guarding forces, namely, ITBP, SSB and Assam Rifles.

**04.** We will enhance the facilities of **health, education and housing** for the personnel of the CAPFs and their families to bring them on par with the facilities provided for the Armed Forces. We will set up schools on the model of Sainik schools to enhance educational opportunities for their children.

**05.** Congress promises to enhance the **status of the jawan** and the benefits to the families of jawans in cases where the jawan dies in action.

**06.** We will set up a Committee to draft **new Service Rules** for personnel of the CAPFs.

## 20 Art, Culture and Heritage

Art, culture and heritage constitute the identity of a people. A multi-cultural country like India can be truly proud of our many identities, which deserve to be protected and preserved.

**01.** Congress is committed to protecting the rich diversity of India's art and culture and to ensuring it flourishes in an atmosphere of freedom and creativity. We will resolutely **oppose censorship** as well as any attempt to denigrate the art and culture of any group.

**02.** Sufficient support and **funds** will be provided to preserve and promote the art, culture and heritage of the groups of people whose identities are unique and are of anthropological significance.

**03.** We will provide **fellowships** to artists and craftspeople working in the field of traditional arts and crafts.

**04.** Congress will **guarantee artistic freedom**. Artists and craftsmen will enjoy the freedom to express their views in any form without fear of censorship or retribution. Attempts by vigilante groups to censor or intimidate artists will be viewed seriously and action against them will be taken according to the law.



05. Congress promises **autonomy to cultural institutions**, including financial autonomy.
06. We will promote **art education** in schools and colleges and support institutions that exclusively teach the arts. We will encourage more scholars to study archaeology and anthropology and provide more scholarships and fellowships.
07. Congress will support government and private efforts to establish **museums, art galleries, libraries and archives**. Congress will ensure that these institutions are easily accessible to children, students, historians and researchers.

## 21 Tourism

Foreign tourist arrivals in India in 2018 is estimated at about 1 crore. Comparing this number with the numbers of comparable countries, it indicates substantial under-performance. Congress will take measures to achieve an annual growth of 20 per cent in tourist arrivals.

Tourism is important for many reasons, the most important being its capacity to create jobs for people with different levels of education.

01. Congress promises a **special tax regime** for tourism-related businesses and income.
02. We will establish an adequately capitalised **Tourism Development Bank** to provide low-cost, long-term funds for investment in tourism-related businesses.
03. Congress will work with State Governments to provide, and improve, the **infrastructure** in and around places of tourist interest.
04. Congress will work with State Governments to create **young volunteer groups** to guide and assist visitors at important places of tourist interest.

08. Every effort will be made to retrieve India's **stolen art**.
09. Congress will allocate sufficient funds and support measures to **create digital archives** of India's art and culture.
10. The **Copyright Act** will be strengthened and enforced. The Copyright Board will be reconstituted and empowered to achieve the objects of the Copyright Act.
11. The Archaeological Survey of India deserves and will be provided more funds and human resources. More **historical monuments** will be brought under the care and control of ASI.

## 22 Non-Resident Indians

Congress affirms its belief that non-resident Indians, wherever they live and work, are an inseparable part of India.

01. Congress promises to **re-establish the Ministry of Overseas Indians** that will be tasked to address the concerns of NRIs including their safety, conditions of work, social security and health benefits, education of their children, need for financial services and safe return to India.
02. Congress will task India's Missions abroad to pay special attention to **work safety and work conditions** of Indian citizens in foreign countries. We will appoint a Committee of Overseas Indian Citizens to review the work of the Missions in this regard.
03. We will review and expand the opportunities for **higher education** and review the fee structure for the children of NRIs in colleges and universities in India.
04. Congress promises to design and promote an **NRI Invest Scheme** to offer more opportunities and options to NRIs to invest in India. We will establish a single point of contact and simplify the procedures to enable NRIs to invest in businesses in India.

## 23 Engaging With Citizens and Civil Society

Congress affirms its belief that civil society organisations and groups are an important pillar of a parliamentary democracy. During the tenure of the UPA Governments, civil society played a key role in developing our rights-based agenda. We will continue to engage with civil society activists and organisations and draw on their experience and knowledge.

01. Congress promises to re-constitute the **National Integration Council** to promote unity, solidarity, communal harmony, fraternity and reconciliation. Congress promises to work with the Council to fight divisive and communal forces that are a danger to the unity and solidarity of the country.
02. Congress will set up an **Inter-faith Council** consisting of leaders of all religions in order to promote respect for all religions, mutual tolerance and fraternity, to hold inter-faith dialogues, and enhance cultural exchanges between people belonging to different religions.
03. We will encourage citizens to form **civil society organisations**. We will create an institutional framework under which Central and State Governments may consult civil society organisations on formulating policies, implementing programmes and obtaining feedback on outcomes.
04. Congress will use modern technology along with traditional brick-and-mortar service centres to increase the **role of civil society organisations** in policy and in decision-making.

**Congress will create an institutional framework under which Central and State Governments may consult civil society organisations.**

# Sushasan— Good Governance Through Independent and Accountable Institutions

Congress will restore the dignity, authority and autonomy of our public institutions, which has been eroded by the NDA government, while making them accountable to Parliament. We believe that self-regulation is the best way to correct the abuse of media freedom. We will amend the Press Council of India Act, 1978 to strengthen the system of self-regulation, protect the freedom of journalists, uphold editorial independence and guard against government interference.

## 24 Institutions

Never before have the institutions that underpin a parliamentary democracy been so brazenly undermined, denigrated and captured as in the last 5 years. Examples of this include the Reserve Bank of India, Central Vigilance Commission, Election Commission of India, Central Bureau of Investigation, Enforcement Directorate, Central Information Commission, National Statistics Commission and National Human Rights Commission.

01. Congress promises to restore the **dignity, authority and autonomy** of these institutions while making them accountable to Parliament. Congress promises that selection and appointment to these bodies will be transparent and will be with due regard to the importance of institutional integrity.
02. Congress promises to amend the **Anti-Defection Law** to provide for instant disqualification of a Member of Parliament or a Member of the State Legislature for proven disobedience to the party's whip or for withdrawing allegiance to the party or for supporting another party. A disqualified member shall not be eligible to hold any public office (including that of minister) or be a candidate in an election to Parliament or the State Legislature for a period of 2 years from the date of disqualification.
03. We will introduce the requirement of **public consultation** before a Bill is introduced in Parliament.
04. All government schemes and programmes shall be subjected to social audit. Congress promises to enact a **Social Accountability Act**.
05. Congress promises to amend the **Aadhaar Act**, 2016 in order to restrict the use of Aadhaar to subsidies, benefits and services provided by the government as was originally intended under the law. Congress also promises that, having regard to the inherent limitations of biometric identification, alternate instruments of identification will be allowed under the law.
06. Appointments to the **Lokpal** will be made in accordance with the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013. The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and, in the absence of such a leader, the leader of the largest Opposition Party will be a full-fledged member of the selection committee.

## 25 Anti-Corruption

01. Congress will enforce **anti-corruption laws** without discrimination
02. Congress will cause to be investigated several deals entered into by the **BJP Government** in the last 5 years and, in particular, the **Rafale deal**.
03. Congress will also investigate the circumstances under which a number of scamsters were allowed to leave the country and will take determined steps to bring them back and face legal proceedings.

## 26 Governance, Transparency and Accountability

01. In order to make governance more transparent, result-oriented and accountable, Congress promises to place before the people, annually, a statement on the **implementation of manifesto promises**.
02. We will ensure that **Social Audits** of the programmes taken up for implementation are conducted and placed before the people, at the end of every year, with a report card on achievements and what remains to be done.
03. Congress will review the **Right to Information Act**, 2005 in the light of its working in the last 14 years and omit provisions that may have diluted the Act and add provisions to strengthen the Act. In accordance with the letter and spirit of the Act, Congress promises to appoint as Information Commissioners qualified persons drawn from different sections of the society.
04. We will introduce a **Diversity Index** as a metric to assess and ensure diversity in all government bodies, semi-government agencies, public sector enterprises and other public bodies.
05. Congress promises to pass an **Anti-Discrimination Law** to prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, gender or language in the supply of goods and services that are made available to the public in general such as housing, hostels, hotels, clubs, etc.
06. Congress will re-introduce and pass the **Grievance Redressal Bill**, 2011 to provide for mandatory, time-bound grievance redressal.
07. Rules under the **Whistle-Blowers Protection Act**, 2014 will be made to operationalise the Act. Congress promises to ensure that the law is not weakened or diluted.

## 27 Federalism and Centre-State Relations

A basic feature of the Constitution of India is the principle of federalism. Congress acknowledges that, over the last 5 years, this principle has been eroded to the detriment of the States.

Congress believes that a large country like India cannot be administered by the Central Government alone. In fact, in most matters concerning the daily lives of the people, it is the State Government that is close to the people and, in some matters, it is the Local Government (Municipality or Panchayat) that is even closer to the people.

01. We will review the distribution of legislative fields in the **Seventh Schedule of the Constitution** and build a consensus on transferring some legislative fields from List III (Concurrent List) to List II (State List).
02. We will reduce the **size of Ministries and Departments** in the Central Government in such areas where sufficient capacity has been built by the State Governments.
03. Congress promises to give **primacy to State Governments** in subjects such as school education, primary and secondary health care, child nutrition, drinking water, sanitation and distribution of electricity, and ensure that the Central Government plays a supportive role to State Governments.
04. Congress promises to take forward the idea of the **GST Council of Ministers** and establish such Councils for Agriculture, Education and Healthcare.
05. We will implement the recommendations of the **Fifteenth Finance Commission** and will urge the States to implement the recommendations of their respective State Finance Commissions.
06. Congress, as the author of the **73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitution Amendments**, will prevail upon the States to implement those provisions in letter and spirit and devolve funds, functions and functionaries upon the Panchayats and Municipalities.
07. We will work with State Governments to empower Panchayats and Municipalities through **devolution** of funds including a **share of GST revenues**. We will explore the possibility of direct central grants to Panchayats and Municipalities that was tried successfully in 1988-89 under the Government of Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

08. Congress promises to revive the **Backward Regions Grant Fund** and the **Integrated Action Plan** that were implemented under UPA and achieved significant results.
09. The States in the **North East** have a special place and there are special provisions in the Constitution. For the North Eastern States, the Congress promises to:
  - a. Restore **Special Category status** to the North Eastern States;
  - b. Withdraw the infamous **Citizenship Amendment Bill**, which caused widespread resentment;
  - c. Enhance financial assistance to **the Autonomous District Councils** in acknowledgement of their importance to the North Eastern States.
10. Congress will give Special Category status to **Andhra Pradesh** as promised by Dr. Manmohan Singh on 20 February 2014 in the Rajya Sabha.
11. Congress promises full **statehood to Puducherry**.
12. Congress promises to amend the Government of **National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991** to make it clear that the Lieutenant Governor shall act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers except in matters concerning the 3 reserved subjects.
13. Congress promises a statutory Council each for the **Union Territories** of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli to deliberate and to advise the Lieutenant Governor.

## 28 Local Self Governments

Congress was the proponent and author of the Constitution 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments. Panchayati Raj lies at the core of good governance in our country, where the majority of citizens live outside metropolitan cities. Congress promises to take further measures to strengthen the concept of Local Government—Panchayats and Municipalities.

01. We will remove all provisions stipulating **pre-qualifications** (such as minimum education) for candidates at elections to local bodies.
02. Congress will work with State Governments to ensure that a **share of GST revenue** is allocated to **Panchayats and Municipalities**.
03. Congress promises to enhance the role and authority of the **Gram Sabhas** in matters concerning the villages and Panchayats. Congress will make it obligatory for the Gram Sabha to meet at least twice a year.
04. Congress promises to ensure that the authority of the **Gram Sabha** under the following Acts is obeyed and upheld and the said Acts are implemented in letter and spirit:
  - a. The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996
  - b. The Forest Rights Act, 2006
  - c. The Land Acquisition Act, 2013

## 29 Judiciary

Congress promises that the independence and integrity of the judiciary will be maintained and protected at all costs.

01. Congress will introduce a Bill to amend the Constitution to make the **Supreme Court a Constitutional Court** that will hear and decide cases involving the interpretation of the Constitution and other cases of legal significance or national importance.
02. Congress will introduce a Bill to amend the Constitution to establish a **Court of Appeal** between the High Courts and the Supreme Court, to hear appeals from judgments and orders of High Courts. The Court of Appeal will sit in multiple Benches of 3 judges each in 6 locations.
03. We will enhance **representation** at all levels of the judiciary for women, SC, ST, OBC, minorities and other under-represented sections of society.
04. We will allocate sufficient **funds** annually to provide the necessary infrastructure for the judiciary.
05. Congress promises to fix the **retirement age of judges** of High Courts and the Supreme Court at 65 years. The retirement age for judicial members in Commissions and Tribunals shall also be 65 years. This will prevent post-retirement assignments for serving judges and allow more opportunities for qualified persons to serve as judges or judicial members.
06. Congress will work with the judiciary to improve the **administration of courts** by introducing modern technology and appointing professionals for court and roster management.
07. We will encourage the judiciary at all levels to adopt **technological tools** to track cases and expedite the hearing and decisions on cases.
08. Learned, independent and upright judges are the core of the judiciary. Congress promises to establish a **National Judicial Commission (NJC)** that will be responsible for selection of judges for appointment to the High Courts and the Supreme Court. The NJC will be comprised of judges, jurists and parliamentarians and will be serviced by a secretariat. Names of suitable candidates will be placed in the public domain and the reasons for selection will be published to ensure that the entire process is transparent. Once the new system is in place, we will endeavour to fill every vacancy in the High Courts or Supreme Court within 2 months.
09. Congress will establish, by law, an independent **Judicial Complaints Commission** to investigate complaints of misconduct against judges and recommend suitable action to Parliament.

## 30 Review of Laws, Rules and Regulations

Freedom is the hallmark of our open and democratic Republic. The purpose of law is regulation in order to strengthen freedom. Laws must be just and reasonable and reflect our Constitutional values.

Congress believes that we are an over-legislated and over-regulated country. Laws, Rules and Regulations have proliferated and restricted freedoms. Consequently, there are severe restrictions on innovation, enterprise and experimentation, and economic growth has suffered.

Congress will initiate a total and comprehensive review of all laws, rules and regulations to:

- a. Repeal instruments that are outdated or unjust or unreasonably restrict the freedoms of the people;
- b. Amend instruments to bring them in accord with the Constitutional values of a democracy; and
- c. Codify and reduce the number of instruments that must be complied with by a citizen.

Specifically, Congress promises to:

01. Decriminalise laws that are essentially laws directed against **civil violations** and can be subjected to civil penalties;
02. **Omit Section 499** of the Indian Penal Code and make 'defamation' a civil offence;
03. **Omit Section 124A** of the Indian Penal Code (that defines the offence of 'sedition') that has been misused and, in any event, has become redundant because of subsequent laws;
04. Amend the laws that allow for **detention without trial** in order to bring them in accord with the spirit, and not just the letter, of the Constitution as well as International Human Rights Conventions;
05. Pass a law titled the **Prevention of Torture Act** to prohibit the use of third-degree methods during custody or interrogation and punish cases of torture, brutality or other police excesses;
06. **Amend the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act**, 1958 in order to strike a balance between the powers of security forces and the human rights of citizens and to remove immunity for enforced disappearance, sexual violence and torture.
07. Amend the laws to declare that every **investigation agency** that has the power to search, seize, attach, summon, interrogate and arrest will be subject to the restrictions imposed on the police by the Constitution, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act; and
08. Amend the **Code of Criminal Procedure** and related laws to affirm the principle that 'Bail is the rule and jail is the exception.'
09. At the **administrative level**, Congress promises to:
  - a. Release immediately all **remand and under trial prisoners** facing charges punishable with imprisonment of 3 years or less who have spent 3 months in prison;
  - b. Release immediately all **remand and under trial prisoners** facing charges punishable with imprisonment of 3 to 7 years who have spent 6 months in prison; and
  - c. Institute **comprehensive prison reforms** recognizing the principle that prisoners enjoy human and legal rights and that prisons are institutions of correction.

***Congress will initiate a comprehensive review of all laws, rules and regulations to repeal instruments that are outdated or unjust or unreasonably restrict the freedoms of the people.***

## 31 Electoral Reforms

The greatest challenge to free and fair elections is the Election Commission's inability to prevent the use of black money in election campaigns and the use of inducements to influence voters. We will take steps to curb and eliminate this menace.

01. We will scrap the opaque **Electoral Bond Scheme** that was designed to favour the ruling party.
02. Congress promises to set up a **National Election Fund** to which any person may make a contribution. Funds will be allocated at the time of elections to recognised political parties in accordance with criteria laid down by law.
03. Congress will ensure that **EVMs and VVPATs are tamperproof**. During counting, the count in at

least 50 per cent of the EVMs will be matched against the physical count of the voting slips in the corresponding VVPATs.

04. We will allocate substantially more free **airtime** on All India Radio and Doordarshan at the time of elections to recognised political parties in accordance with criteria laid down by law.

## 32 Police Reforms

01. 'Police' and 'Law & Order' are State subjects. Congress promises to consult State Governments and reach a consensus on the police reforms directed by the Supreme Court in the Prakash Singh case. Based on the consensus, Congress will pass a **Model Police Act** that the States will be advised to adopt and enact in the State Legislatures.
02. The objectives of the Model Police Act will be to make the police forces **modern, technology-enabled, people-friendly**, and upholders of human rights and legal rights.
03. Provisions will be made in the Model Police Act to:
  - a. Make the State police force accountable to an independent **Police Accountability Commission** as well as to give an annual report to the State Legislature.
  - b. **Decentralise the police force** in the State and to involve the community in the oversight of the police force.
  - c. Cause investigations into cases of communal riots, lynchings and gang rapes by a **special wing of the State police** under the direct command of the State Headquarters of the police.

## 33 Media and Freedom of The Media

Congress firmly believes that the media must be free and self-regulated.

01. In recent times, sections of the media have abused or surrendered their freedom. Nevertheless, we believe that self-regulation is the best way to correct the abuse of media freedom. Congress promises to amend the **Press Council of India Act**, 1978 to strengthen the system of self-regulation, protect the freedom of journalists, uphold editorial independence and guard against government interference.
02. Congress will amend the **Press Council of India Act** to empower the Council to deal with the menace of fake news and paid news.
03. We will work with the Press Council of India and associations of newspapers and media to formulate and enforce a **Code of Conduct** on reporting in situations of natural disaster, communal conflict, riots, terrorist attacks and war in order to ensure a balance between the need to inform, need for restraint, maintenance of law and order, and interest of national security.
04. Congress will pass a law to **curb monopolies** in the media, cross-ownership of different segments of the media and control of the media by other business organisations. Congress will refer cases of suspected monopolies to the Competition Commission of India.
05. Congress promises to pass a law to preserve the freedom of the Internet and to prevent arbitrary and frequent shutdowns of the Internet.
06. We will work with State Governments to formulate rules to require the police to extend protection to **journalists** working in conflict areas or investigating matters of public interest and to journalists whose lives are threatened or otherwise in danger.
07. Congress promises to amend the **Cinematograph Act**, 1927 to restrict censorship of films to grounds of national security and obscenity. We will direct the Central Board of Film Certification to certify films according to transparent and reasonable criteria.

## 34 Perspective Planning and The New Planning Commission

In a federal system comprising States and a Central Government with numerous ministries and departments administering specific subjects, it is necessary to have an expert body to

- a. Independently evaluate competing claims;
  - b. Mediate between the Central and State Governments and between the Ministry of Finance and the various departments regarding allocation of funds;
  - c. Monitor the utilisation of funds; and
  - d. Assess and evaluate the gap between expenditure and outcomes. The Planning Commission performed these functions besides other functions. The BJP Government's decision to abolish the Planning Commission was thoughtless and absurd.
01. Congress will **scrap the Niti Aayog**, which has proved to be a noisy and incompetent intermeddler. Congress promises to constitute a Planning Commission with re-defined responsibilities such as to formulate medium and long-term perspective plans and to function as an independent expert body to perform crucial functions in a federal system.
  02. Congress promises that the new Planning Commission will be a **lean organisation** with renowned economists and financial experts as members assisted by a small but high-quality team of scholars from different fields and support staff totalling a maximum of 100 persons.

# Swabhimaan— Self-Esteem for The Deprived



Congress will pass the Constitution (Amendment) Bill to provide for reservation of 33 per cent of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies in the first session of the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha and in the Rajya Sabha. We will amend the Service Rules to reserve for women 33 per cent of appointments to posts in the Central Government.

## 35 Women's Empowerment and Gender Justice

Historically, Congress has been at the forefront of the struggle for women's rights, equality and empowerment. India's only woman Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi, belonged to the Congress. We passed many laws that empowered women. We mainstreamed gender in government schemes.

01. Congress promises to pass the Constitution (Amendment) Bill to provide for reservation of **33 per cent of seats** in the **Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies** in the first session of the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha and in the Rajya Sabha.
02. We will amend the Service Rules to reserve for women **33 per cent of appointments** to posts in the **Central Government**.
03. The **Equal Remuneration Act**, 1976 will be enforced effectively. We will review all laws that stipulate wage rates to provide that men and women are paid the same wage for similar work.
04. We will stipulate that every Special Economic Zone shall have **working women's hostels** and safe transport facilities to increase the participation of women in the labour force.
05. We will repeal any provision of law that prohibits **night shifts** for women.
06. Sufficient **night shelters** will be built for migrant women workers. Adequate number of safe and hygienic **public toilets** for women will be provided in towns and cities. **Sanitary napkin vending machines** will be installed in public spaces, schools and colleges.
07. Congress promises a comprehensive review of the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplaces Act**, 2013 and will extend the Act to all workplaces. We will additionally institute measures to address all forms of harassment of women.
08. Congress will pass a model legislation to establish a **separate investigative agency** to investigate heinous crimes against women and children and urge State Governments to enact a law to establish such an investigative agency.
09. Congress pioneered the women's self-help group (SHG) movement that today boasts of 87 lakh groups. Congress also launched the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM – Aajeevika). We promise to **launch NRLM-2** to make SHGs a key instrument for the economic empowerment of women, to increase livelihood opportunities and to usher in transformative social change.
10. We will work with State Governments to implement a programme to provide **single, widowed, divorced, abandoned or destitute women** a dignified and secure life.
11. Congress promises to launch a programme to appoint an Adhikar Maitri in every Panchayat to serve as a paralegal to educate women on, and assist them in the enforcement of, their legal rights.
12. We will pass suitable legislation to make **registration of marriages** compulsory and we will enforce the law prohibiting child marriages.
13. Congress promises to **expand ICDS** and provide a **crèche** in every Anganwadi based on need and demand.

## 36 Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes

The Constitution of India provides for reservation in employment and educational institutions for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. We must do even more to ensure justice to the historically disadvantaged sections of our people.

01. Congress promises a holistic agenda of affirmative action for SCs, STs and OBCs who constitute a little more than 75 per cent of the population. Hence, Congress promises to set up an **Equal Opportunities Commission**, which will recommend affirmative action strategies and policies to achieve equality—and equity—in education, employment and in economic opportunities. We will implement the recommendations of the Equal Opportunities Commission.
02. We will pass a law to restore the original purpose and intent of the **200-point roster system** and implement it for the institution as a whole.
03. Congress promises to fill all backlog **vacancies** reserved for SCs, STs and OBCs in government, semi-government and central public sector organisations within 12 months.
04. Congress promises to amend the Constitution to provide for **reservation in promotion** posts for SCs, STs and OBCs.

05. Congress will acquire **panchami and mahar lands** in the occupation of non-Dalits and distribute the lands to SCs and STs.
06. We will implement a scheme under which **basic amenities** such as water, sanitation, electricity and internal roads will be provided in every SC and ST habitation.
07. Special attention will be paid to the **educational and health needs** of the Scheduled Tribes.
08. We will increase the number and extend the **Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship**, presently available to SCs and STs, to scholars belonging to the OBCs.
09. In order to enable SCs, STs and OBCs to compete as equals, Congress will require public schools to offer **English as a language of study** in Classes VI to XII.
10. Congress promises to pass a law to provide for reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs in **private higher education institutions**.
11. We will work with State Governments to review the curriculum of schools and include texts on the **history and culture** of SCs and STs and the contributions made by leaders belonging to these communities.
12. It will be our national mission to implement, in letter and spirit, the **Forest Rights Act**, 2006 and to secure for the Scheduled Tribes the rights guaranteed under the Act.
13. Congress promises to remove the inconsistencies between the **Forest Rights Act** and the **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority Act**, 2005 and to reaffirm the role of the Gram Sabha.
14. We promise a time-bound review of all **IFR/CFR claims** rejected under the Forest Rights Act and disposal within 6 months. Meanwhile, we will stop the eviction of the 18.9 lakh households that face imminent eviction.
15. We will establish a **National Commission for Non-Timber Forest Produce** and offer **Minimum Support Prices** for such produce to improve the livelihood and income of Adivasis.
16. Under the Affirmative Action Programme, Congress will ensure that a fair share of **government procurement** and government contracts is given to SCs, STs and OBCs.
17. We will pass a law to require governments to transparently disclose in their budget documents the allocations to SCs and STs under the **Special Component Plan for SCs and Tribal Sub-Plan for STs** and to prohibit diversion of such funds.

## 37 Jammu & Kashmir

Congress has stood witness to the developments in Jammu & Kashmir since the Instrument of Accession was signed on 26 October 1947. Congress affirms that the whole of Jammu & Kashmir is part of India. We also acknowledge the unique history of the State and the unique circumstances under which the State acceded to India that led to the inclusion of Article 370 in the Constitution of India. Nothing will be done or allowed to change the Constitutional position.

01. Congress has long held the view that **dialogue** is the only way to understand the aspirations of the people of the 3 regions of Jammu & Kashmir and find an honourable solution to their issues. We will take that path.
02. We will adopt a **two-pronged approach**: firstly, uncompromising firmness on the border and ending infiltration; and secondly, absolute fairness in dealing with the demands of the people and winning their hearts and minds.
03. Congress promises to review the **deployment of armed forces**, move more troops to the border to stop infiltration completely, reduce the presence of the Army and CAPFs in the Kashmir Valley, and entrust more responsibility to the J&K police for maintaining law and order.
04. The **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and the Disturbed Areas Act** in J&K will be reviewed. Suitable changes will be made in the text of the laws to balance the requirements of security and the protection of human rights.
05. Building a Union of States that is India is a **project of inclusiveness**. Jammu & Kashmir and its problems deserve a large-hearted approach that will eschew muscular militarism and legalistic formulations and look for an innovative federal solution. Congress promises to find such a solution through patient dialogue and talks with all stakeholders in the State.
06. Congress promises the people of J&K talks without pre-conditions. We will appoint 3 **interlocutors** drawn from civil society to facilitate such talks.

- 07. We will renew the initiatives taken by the UPA government such as UDAAN, HIMAYAT and UMMEED to impart training in skills and create economic opportunities for the youth of J&K.
- 08. **Free and fair elections** to the State Legislative Assembly will be held immediately.

## 38 North Eastern States

Congress affirms that the North Eastern States (NES) are a unique and valued part of India that bring into our Union many diverse and rich cultures, languages, traditions and bio-diversity. We are committed to defending and protecting the interests of the NES and their people and to ensuring the rapid economic development of the region.

- 01. Congress promises to restore the **Special Category status** to the NES.
- 02. Congress promises an **industrial policy** for the NES.
- 03. We will withdraw immediately the widely resented **Citizenship Amendment Bill** introduced by the BJP Government against the wishes of the people of the NES.
- 04. We will ensure that no citizen of India is denied inclusion in the final **National Register of Citizens**.
- 05. We will address the issue of **illegal immigration** into the NES through consultation with the NES and evolve a consensus on the legislative measures that will secure the identity of the indigenous communities. We will also engage the neighbouring countries, Bangladesh and Myanmar, to address and resolve the issue of illegal immigration into India.
- 06. Congress will strengthen the **security of the borders** of the NES with Bangladesh, Myanmar and China, resolve any border issues through dialogue with the neighbouring countries and make the borders 'borders of prosperity and growth;' and
- 07. We will resolve the pending **inter-state issues**, including boundary issues, in the NES through dialogue or mediation.
- 08. The importance of **border trade** to the economy of the NES cannot be overstated. Regular export and import trade will also create huge economic opportunities, including more jobs, in the NES. We promise to take bold and innovative measures to enhance trade in general, and border trade in particular, with neighbouring countries and other countries further to the east.
- 09. We are deeply concerned about the cases of **discrimination and harassment** of students, traders and others belonging to Jammu & Kashmir in the rest of India and we will ensure their safety and their right to study or do business.
- 09. Congress will strengthen the **North Eastern Council** and take steps to expand and reinforce the original mandate of the Council.
- 10. We will cause a **comprehensive review of the policies** and special programmes that are under implementation in the NES and make changes wherever necessary.
- 11. Congress promises to substantially increase the budget outlays for **infrastructure and social sector development** in the NES, especially for railways, roads, communication, connectivity and tourism. We will provide sufficient funds to address the development gaps in education and healthcare.
- 12. We will leverage the rich bio-diversity and natural resources of the NES to generate livelihood opportunities in **sustainable agriculture**, horticulture and organic farming.
- 13. We will use modern technology to harness the waters of the **Brahmaputra** and to find a permanent solution to the problems of flood and soil erosion. We will examine the opportunity provided by the mighty Brahmaputra to create a multi-modal transport system in the North Eastern region.
- 14. Congress acknowledges the importance of **Autonomous District Councils** within the NES and promises to enhance financial assistance to these Councils.
- 15. We will ensure that **tea garden workers** are paid wages and given other benefits in accordance with the laws applicable to them and according to the bilateral agreements.

## 39 Religious And Linguistic Minorities

The strength and vibrancy of a true democracy are often judged by the rights and protection accorded to its minorities. In the last 5 years under the BJP Government, hate crimes and atrocities against the minorities and other vulnerable sections of the people have increased manifold. The perpetrators of these crimes walk on the streets with impunity.

- 01. Congress promises to uphold the **rights of religious minorities**: to non-discrimination, to equal opportunity in employment, to religious freedom and to establish educational institutions guaranteed under Articles 15, 16, 25, 26, 28, 29 and 30 of the Constitution.
- 02. We also promise to uphold the **rights of linguistic minorities**: to non-discrimination, to equal opportunity in employment and to establish educational institutions guaranteed under Articles 15, 16, 29 and 30 of the Constitution.
- 03. Congress promises that rules will be made to ensure that the **decennial census** accurately enumerates the number of people claiming a language as their mother tongue or as their preferred spoken language.
- 04. Congress promises to support the promotion of all the **languages** of our country including languages not included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. We will encourage, as far as possible, the use of such languages, including the languages of Scheduled Tribes and Nomadic Tribes, in the administration of areas where such languages are widely spoken by the people.
- 05. We support the use of **Sign Language** that is used by millions of people with disabilities.
- 06. Congress supports the principle that school education is best imparted in the **mother tongue** of the child and promises to support the efforts of State Governments to promote the use of the mother tongue as the preferred medium of instruction.
- 07. We will also support the efforts of State Governments to teach the official **language(s)** of the State, as well as Hindi and English to children of that State.
- 08. We will pass a new law in the first session of the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha and in the Rajya Sabha to prevent and punish **hate crimes** such as mob-engineered stripping, burning and lynching. The law will contain provisions to compensate the victims and to hold accountable the police and district administration for proven negligence.
- 09. The **Waqf Properties** (Eviction of Unauthorized Occupants) Bill, 2014 will be re-introduced and passed. Waqf properties will be restored to the legal trustees.
- 10. Congress promises to uphold the character of **Aligarh Muslim University** and **Jamia Millia Islamia** as minority educational institutions.
- 11. We promise that the **National Commission for Women and the National Commission for Minorities** will be given Constitutional status as in the cases of similar Commissions.

**Congress will pass a new law in the first session of the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha and in the Rajya Sabha to prevent and punish hate crimes.**

## 40 Denotified Tribes and Semi-Nomadic Tribes

Denotified and Semi-Nomadic Tribes have long suffered discrimination and neglect. Congress believes that it is the duty of the Central and State Governments to reach out to these groups and correct these injustices.

01. Congress promises a **Special Census** and the enumeration of Denotified and Semi-Nomadic Tribes and the integration of the data in the decennial census.
02. We will examine the feasibility of providing **compartmental reservation** for Denotified and Semi-Nomadic Tribes as citizens belonging to socially and educationally Backward Classes.
03. We will immediately repeal the **Habitual Offenders Act**, 1952 that has discriminated against and stigmatised Denotified and Semi-Nomadic Tribes and led to their harassment.
04. Congress will work with State Governments to impart **education and skills** to Denotified and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, especially the children, in order that they may find productive jobs and reap the benefits of economic development.

## 41 Senior Citizens

Congress acknowledges that about 9 per cent of the population of India is over the age of 60 years and this proportion will increase.

Congress promises to review current policies on senior citizens and make suitable changes, taking into account advances in medical science and technology.

01. Under the **Right to Healthcare Act**, we will provide affordable and quality healthcare to senior citizens in hospitals including free diagnostics, out-patient treatment, medicines and hospital treatment. Geriatric wards with sufficient beds will be opened in every district-level hospital.
02. We will introduce well-designed **pension and health insurance** schemes that will guarantee insured persons a life of dignity and comfort when they become senior citizens.
03. Senior citizens can contribute to the development of the communities in which they live. We will create **opportunities** for senior citizens to do so.
04. We will take measures to ensure easy access to **legal services and recourse** to senior citizens especially in cases of neglect, abuse, abandonment, eviction and financial fraud.
05. Congress promises to enforce strictly the provisions of the **Maintenance and Welfare of Senior Citizens Act**, 2017.

## 42 Persons With Disabilities

By one estimate, there are 4 crore people in India who are persons with disabilities. Congress is firmly committed to upholding the rights, dignity and self-respect of persons with disabilities. We promise a fair deal for persons with disabilities and opportunities for them to be employed, productive and contributing to the welfare of their families and to the progress of our nation.

01. Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution will be amended to prohibit **discrimination** on the ground of 'disability' or 'impairment.'
02. All **public services and public spaces**, government offices and private premises will be made inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.
03. We will set up an **information portal** to enable easy access to information on all 21 disabilities included in the Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and to create awareness on the rights of persons with disabilities.
04. Congress promises to direct all **Ministries and Departments** to cause a quick review of their policy statements and programmes in order to ensure that they acknowledge, protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

05. We will propose an Amendment to the Constitution to recognise the **Braille script and Sign Language** as languages.
06. We will establish a **National Centre of Research and Excellence for Special Education** to ensure that quality education is imparted to children with special needs and children with disabilities.
07. Congress promises to commission an **annual social audit** of policies and programmes for persons with disabilities.
08. All **assistive and adaptive aids, appliances and devices** will be zero-rated under the GST 2.0 regime.

## 43 Rights Of LGBTQIA+

Congress recognises the sexual diversity among people and promises equality and equal protection of the laws to people with different sexual identities.

01. Congress promises to ensure the effective implementation of the judgment in the Navtej Singh Johar case. We will protect the rights of the **LGBTQIA+** community.
02. We will immediately withdraw the **Transgender Bill, 2018**, pending in Parliament. Instead, Congress will introduce a Bill that will be consistent with the judgment in the NALSA case. The new Bill will be drafted in consultation with the LGBTQIA+ community.
03. We will direct that **gender sensitivity training**, especially for the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community, be made mandatory in all government departments and organisations including the Armed Forces and the Police Forces.

# Samman— A Life of Dignity For All

Congress promises to enact the Right to Healthcare Act that will guarantee to every citizen the right to healthcare services, including free diagnostics, out-patient care, medicines and hospitalisation through a network of public hospitals and enlisted private hospitals. We will ensure that government expenditure on healthcare and education will be doubled to 3 per cent of GDP and 6 per cent of GDP respectively by 2023–24.

## 44 Healthcare

Healthcare, is a public good. Full healthcare is the right of every citizen—child, adult and senior citizen.

Providing healthcare is a shared responsibility of the Central and State Governments. We recognise that the principal responsibility for providing primary and secondary healthcare lies with the State Governments and the principal responsibility for providing tertiary and super-specialty healthcare lies with the Central Government.

01. Congress promises that the total **government expenditure** on healthcare will be doubled to 3 per cent of GDP by the year 2023-24. The Annual Budgets will indicate the step up in each year in order to achieve the target in 2023-24.
02. Congress promises to enact the **Right to Healthcare Act** that will guarantee to every citizen the right to healthcare services, including free diagnostics, out-patient care, medicines and hospitalisation through a network of public hospitals and enlisted private hospitals.
03. We are of the firm belief that the insurance-based model cannot be the preferred model to provide universal healthcare in our country. Congress promises to vigorously promote and implement the **free public hospitals-model** to provide universal healthcare.
04. Congress will substantially expand the free **Dial-an-Ambulance service** and put on the road more ambulances in all the districts of India.
05. **Trauma and Emergency Centres** will be established on all National and State Highways to cater to the travelling public as well as the population in the surrounding area.
06. We will expand **child healthcare services** (pre-natal, post-natal and pediatric) and geriatric services in all public hospitals.
07. We will implement the **Clinical Establishments Act**, 2010 to bring accountability to the functioning of private and public clinical establishments.
08. Congress promises to promote, and eventually mandate, the **digitisation of medical records** on the foundation of a robust ICT infrastructure with suitable provisions for privacy, mobility and inter-operability.
09. We promise to formulate a **National Telemedicine Policy** based on international best practices.
10. India's current **doctor** to population ratio is 1:1681 and government doctor to population ratio is 1:11,528. Congress promises to increase the number of doctors, including specialist doctors, significantly by establishing more medical colleges, increasing the capacity of medical colleges and providing scholarships and loans to medical students.
11. Congress promises to **license pre-qualified institutions** in the public sector and private sector to teach and certify medical professionals such as nurses, paramedics and medical technicians.
12. We will promote **AYUSH**, the Indian systems of medicine, in the provision of healthcare services and especially in preventive healthcare.
13. Congress will implement a programme that will enable State Governments to revamp and equip the network of **primary health centres (PHCs)**. PHCs will provide all primary health services, including preventive measures and wellness services, and become referral centres for serious medical cases.
14. We will ensure that all **vacancies** at all levels in PHCs and in public hospitals are filled within a period of 1 year.
15. We will expand the **ASHA programme** and appoint a second ASHA worker in all villages with a population exceeding 2500 persons.
16. Congress promises to implement the **National Mental Health Policy**, 2014 and the Mental Health Care Act, 2017 in letter and spirit. We will ensure that mental healthcare professionals are appointed in all public district hospitals and that mental healthcare services are provided in such hospitals.

## 45 Education

Education is a merit good and must be available to all children as a public good. Congress promises that State and Central Governments shall be responsible for providing educational opportunities to all children. Schools, colleges and universities shall be, mostly, public institutions funded through public resources. Private educational institutions may supplement public educational institutions.

01. Congress will propose that **School Education** be **transferred to the State List** in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution while retaining the subject of Higher Education in the Union List.
02. Congress promises that school education from **Class I to Class XII in public schools** shall be **compulsory and free**. Suitable amendments will be made in the Right to Education Act, 2009. We will end the practice of charging special fees for different purposes in public schools.
03. We are deeply concerned about the quality of education and poor **learning outcomes** as reported in the Annual Survey of Education Report (ASER). Congress promises to attach the highest importance to learning outcomes.
04. The **teacher** is the pivot around whom the entire system of education revolves. Teacher training and the continuing education of teachers are the key to quality instruction. Congress promises to increase the capacity, number and quality of Teacher Training Institutes set up by the government. Regulation of Teacher Training Institutes will be the responsibility of the National Council for Teacher Education and their funding will be the responsibility of the University Grants Commission or its successor. A scheme for the periodic and continuing education of teachers will be implemented and teachers will be required to mandatorily participate in the scheme.
05. Congress promises to double the **allocation for Education** to 6 per cent of GDP in the 5 years ending 2023-24. A path forward will be laid down in the regular Budget for 2019-20 and specific annual targets will be set.
06. The Right to Education Act brought to the fore critical deficiencies in the school systems across the country. In States where the Act was implemented well, many of these deficiencies were rectified. But much remains to be done, especially in the educationally backward districts of the States. Congress promises increased expenditure to provide basic and adequate **infrastructure** in every school from Class I to Class XII that will include classrooms, library, laboratory, playground, toilets, drinking water, etc. Hostels will be constructed based on demand.
07. Congress promises to increase the number of **Kendriya Vidyalayas** and **Navodaya Vidyalayas** based on demand and with the co-operation of the State Governments.
08. It is a matter of grave concern that children drop out of school. We promise to arrest this trend and ensure that every child completes 12 years of school education.
09. In order to ensure a uniform **quality of education** and to improve learning outcomes, Congress promises to employ **technology-enabled teaching** methods and technology-driven, personalised and adaptive learning tools in all schools.
10. Most children stop with school education. In order to make children ready for employment or self-employment, Congress promises to introduce **vocational training** as a compulsory component of school education in Classes IX to XII.
11. Congress will support the **establishment of special schools** for children with special needs.
12. India needs more **Universities**. Congress promises to establish more public universities in the country, especially in under-served areas.
13. We promise to restore the **autonomy of colleges and universities**.
14. We will entrust the **Regulation, Grading and Funding of colleges and universities** to separate organisations. We will provide The University Grants Commission or its successor with sufficient funds to make liberal grants to colleges and universities, based on need and merit.
15. We promise to take suitable measures to include **Guest, Temporary and Contract Teachers** in the regular establishment of Universities so that they receive the benefits due to them.
16. We promise to restore the **200-point roster system** for appointments to central universities and other central institutes of higher learning.
17. Congress deeply respects **teachers** and will ensure that serving teachers are represented in the governing bodies of colleges and universities.
18. Congress promises to establish more **Institutes of Higher Learning** in subjects such as medicine, engineering, commerce, management and pure sciences.
19. We will increase the **Gross Enrollment Ratio** (GER) in Higher Education from the current level of 25.8 to the level of at least 40 in a period of 5 years.



20. The **NEET examination** is discriminatory against students from certain States. In addition, it interferes with the State Government's right to admit students domiciled in the State to medical colleges in that State. Hence, we will take measures to dispense with the NEET examination and substitute it with a State-level examination of equivalent standard, approved by the competent authority for admission to medical colleges in that State.
21. Colleges and Universities will be encouraged to award **Deprivation Points** to students seeking admission based on gender, permanent residence in rural districts, first generation learner, etc. and to admit such students to ensure diversity in the classroom.
22. College and University education must be funded in multiple ways. We promise to increase the amount earmarked for **grants** to colleges and universities.
23. Congress promises to increase the number of **scholarships** offered to students. Colleges and universities will be encouraged to build endowment funds to support deserving poor students.
24. We will revive, redesign and expand the **Education Loan programme**. Applications will be received, examined and sanctioned on a single portal and then assigned to the branch of a bank located near the applicant's residence or place of study for documentation and monitoring. No interest will be charged during the period of study and until the student finds a job or earns through self-employment. Outstanding interest dues on old education loans as on 31 March 2019 will be waived.
25. Congress will pass a **Students Rights Bill** to codify the rights and obligations of students in colleges and universities.

## 46 Food and Nutrition Security

The passage of the National Food Security Act, 2013 by the UPA Government was a revolutionary step that linked Wealth (the Green Revolution) to Welfare (assurance of food security).

01. Congress promises to work tirelessly to assure **food security** to all.
02. Some **Tribal communities** and groups are particularly vulnerable. We will pay special attention to them and ensure that food grains are delivered to them through mobile fair price shops.
03. We will review and update the **list of beneficiaries** within 6 months. Care shall be taken to include the homeless, destitute persons and migrant workers. No eligible person shall be excluded.
04. Congress promises to take special measures to enroll **vulnerable tribal groups** and tribal communities.
05. Congress will ensure that the linking of **Aadhaar** will be voluntary but encouraged. No one shall be excluded because of non-linking of Aadhaar.

## 47 Child Welfare

Children are the most valuable human resource of a country. Congress believes that it is the duty of the Central and State Governments to ensure that every child enjoys all the rights of a child, especially complete education and full health.

01. Congress promises to expand the **ICDS programme**, increase funding support and increase the number of Anganwadis. Anganwadi workers shall be paid atleast the State minimum wage.
02. Based on need and demand, **Anganwadis** will include a **crèche** to provide day care to small children and to empower working mothers.
03. Nutritious food is the mainstay of the ICDS programme. We will closely monitor the coverage and **quality** of the programme. There will be a **social audit** of the outcomes pertaining to the improvement of children's nutrition levels.
04. We will ensure that every child is **vaccinated**.
05. Complete education is dependent on **learning outcomes** and the child completing 12 years

06. The quality and delivery of the **Mid-Day Meal Scheme** will be improved. Milk and eggs shall be included in the meal. The cost allowed for a Mid-Day Meal shall be increased. There will be a social audit of the scheme at the block and district levels and the outcomes, in terms of nutrition levels of the children, will be measured and monitored.
07. The **public food distribution programmes** (Mid-Day Meal Scheme, ICDS etc.) will rely, as far as possible, on **fresh produce**. This will encourage local production and provide a fillip to local markets.

04. Congress promises to double the budget allocation for **cleaning rivers**, including the Ganga. Congress promises to review the current methodology for cleaning rivers and to strengthen efforts by employing the latest advances in science and technology. We will convert the Ganga Action Plan into a People's Programme and implement the same.
05. Congress will review and re-introduce the **Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA)** to ensure universal access to a clean, functioning toilet with water. Instead of chasing numbers, Congress promises that NBA will support the construction of individual toilets (that will be the responsibility of the household) as well as community toilets (that will be the responsibility of pre-qualified NGOs).
06. We will implement a comprehensive plan for the treatment and safe disposal of **sewage**.
07. Congress promises to focus on **hygiene**, including menstrual hygiene, by promoting hand washing, use of disposable tissue paper and low-cost sanitary napkins. Panchayats, Municipalities and NGOs will be supported to install sanitary napkin vending machines in schools, colleges and select public places.
08. Congress promises to end the evil of **manual scavenging** in 3 years. Every manual scavenger will be rehabilitated, re-skilled, provided a job and assured a life of dignity and safety. The Prohibition of Manual Scavenging Act, 2013 will be strictly implemented and any person employing anyone for manual scavenging shall be punished. We will allocate sufficient funds to enable the procurement of machines that will clean sewers and septic tanks and remove human waste.

## 48 Water Management, Sanitation and Hygiene

Access to water and sanitation are basic human rights. Congress promises to address the challenges of water and sanitation through advocacy, technology and legislation.

01. Congress promises universal access to **potable drinking water**. The National Drinking Water Mission will be reviewed and strengthened. Budget allocations will be substantially increased.
02. Congress recognises the challenge of water scarcity and promises to create a **Ministry of Water** to bring all water-related activities and departments under one authority.
03. We will pay special attention to **access to water** and democratic sharing of water. We will address these issues by focusing on storage in dams and water bodies, replenishing ground water and creating a large participatory programme of water management involving the State Governments, civil society organisations, farmers, other users, Panchayats and Gram Sabhas.

## 49 Environment And Climate Change

Congress was the first Indian political party to acknowledge the consequences of Climate Change (Smt. Indira Gandhi in Stockholm on 14 June 1972).

It is a bitter truth that India's environment has deteriorated. The 2018 Global Environmental Performance Index placed India at rank 177 out of 180 countries. The BJP Government has done virtually nothing in the last 5 years to arrest this decline.

01. Congress promises an action agenda that will place India at the forefront of the battle against global warming and for the **protection of the environment**. At the same time, Congress will defend and advance India's interests in international negotiations on Climate Change and the Environment.
02. We will constitute, by law, an independent, empowered and transparent **Environment Protection Authority (EPA)** to establish, monitor and enforce environmental standards and regulations. The EPA will replace all other bodies that currently exercise jurisdiction and powers.
03. Congress recognises that **air pollution is a national public health emergency**. We will significantly strengthen the National Clean Air Programme in order to urgently tackle the problem of pollution. All major sources of emission will be targetted, mitigated and reduced to acceptable levels. Sectoral emission standards will be set.
04. We will formulate a **comprehensive land and water use policy** and plan that will include measures for the conservation of ecosystems and the bio-diversity and wildlife contained therein, without affecting the legitimate rights of local communities.
05. We will work closely with the State Governments concerned to preserve the rich bio-diversity of the **Himalayan range** and the **Western Ghats**. However, the livelihood opportunities of the people living in these mountains will be protected.
06. Congress will join hands with State Governments to stop, fully and finally, the **discharge of effluents** into the rivers and to clean all the rivers of India.
07. Congress promises to protect the **coastal zones** of the country. Recent steps that diluted the coastal zone regulations will be reversed. The coast will be preserved without affecting the livelihood opportunities of fishing communities.
08. We will impose a complete ban on the import of all types of **waste**.
09. We will allow the import of sand for construction and stop the **illegal mining of sand** in riverbanks.
10. We will implement a **solid waste management plan** in every habitation, village, town and city employing modern technology and machinery. Those engaged in waste management and disposal will be assured appropriate equipment, dignity and safe working conditions.
11. Congress will confer legal and financial powers upon **Panchayats and Municipalities** to enable them to partner with State Governments in environment protection and management and to convert the total effort into a grassroots movement involving youth, women, communities and NGOs.

12. Congress promises to amend laws governing forests, re-define the role of the Forest Departments and make **local communities the custodians** of forests and shareholders of forest resources.
13. We will work with State Governments to **increase the forest cover** from the current level of 21 per cent to 25 per cent by the year 2025 and, towards that goal, take the following steps:
  - a. Re-define the words and phrase 'forest' and 'forest cover' in accordance with modern scientific standards;
  - b. Assess the exact forest cover at the district level;
  - c. Involve local communities in afforestation projects and the selection of species of plants; and
  - d. Prohibit and penalise the diversion of funds for forest conservation and afforestation.

***Congress promises an action agenda that will place India at the forefront of the battle against global warming and for the protection of the environment.***

## 50 Climate Resilience and Disaster Management

It is not possible to eradicate poverty without tackling the dual threats of climate change and natural disasters. It is the poor who suffer most on account of natural disasters and climate change.

01. Congress promises to re-visit the **National Disaster Management Act**, 2005 and incorporate changes, based upon the experience gained in the working of the Act and in managing natural disasters that have occurred over the last 14 years.
02. We will review the working of the **National Disaster Management Authority** and emphasise the equally important function of preventing disasters.
03. We will not limit **disaster management** to humans and will include it to cover the impact of disasters on wild animals, domestic animals, pets, livestock, agricultural crops and plantations.
04. We will use the **MGNREGA programme** to execute public works that will mitigate the impact of disasters such as floods and droughts.

14. Congress promises to **preserve wildlife habitats** and manage and minimise human—wildlife conflict and award compensation for the loss of human lives.
15. We will promote the welfare of animals and severely penalise cruelty to animals.
16. Congress promises to provide **clean cooking fuels** at affordable prices to all the households of the country. We will monitor the price of LPG cylinders and mitigate through subsidies the burden of price increases on the homemaker.
17. We will present the national accounts in a form that will account for the costs of environmental degradation and damage. The Annual Budget will adopt the core principles of **Green Budgeting**.
18. Congress will endeavour to make India a **green manufacturing hub**. We will reduce tariffs and lift trade barriers for clean technology and provide incentives for the adoption of such technologies.

## 51 Digital Rights of Every Citizen

Congress affirms its belief that every Indian shall enjoy digital rights and freely access the digital world. Congress promises to:

01. Provide access to all persons to **high quality internet** at affordable rates;
02. Uphold the principle of **net neutrality** to ensure the internet stays a level playing field;
03. Regulate the **power to shut down the internet** and to prevent arbitrary shut downs;
04. Promote the development and use of **open standards and free and open source software** in order to enable citizens to avail of government services and access government information without being obliged to rely on proprietary software;
05. Pass a law to protect the personal data of all persons and uphold the **right to privacy**;
06. Pass a law to provide adequate safeguards against unlawful or **excessive surveillance and monitoring** and provide for both independent and Parliamentary oversight;
07. Make all **government departments publish all non-private data** sets as open data, allowing citizens to access the data without having to file RTI requests; and
08. Pass regulations to stop the spread of **fake news** and hate speech and punish those who misuse digital and social media.

## 52 Sports

Congress affirms its belief that India has the potential to become a great sporting nation. Our sports policy will aim to inculcate in our citizens, especially students and youth, the culture of sports and fitness and will encourage sports as a career.

01. Congress promises to respect the autonomy of the **Indian Olympic Association** and the Apex Body of each sport. Government will work with each body to promote the sport concerned.
02. Congress will take suitable measures to ensure that the Constitution of each **sports body** is in accordance with certain norms and principles, that elections are held according to them, and that there is adequate representation in each sports body for active players, former players and women.
03. We will make **physical education and sports** an integral and mandatory part of the school curriculum and encourage higher education institutions to accord sports an important place.
04. Congress promises to allocate sufficient funds to create **modern sports infrastructure** in different parts of the country such as multi-sport stadium, athletic track, football field, astro-turf, tennis, badminton, basketball and volleyball courts, gymnasium, swimming pool and velodrome. We will entrust the maintenance and management of each facility to the Apex Body of that sport.
05. Congress will allocate sufficient funds to train and produce **coaches** and other technical support personnel in each sport.
06. Congress promises to establish **Centres of Sporting Excellence** in different parts of the country in order to offer world-class training and coaching facilities to sportspersons who meet national or international standards of excellence.
07. We will ensure that there is at least 1 **community sports centre** in the headquarters of each block and in municipal towns and at least 1 multi-sport coaching centre in every district headquarters.
08. Congress will ensure that there is at least 1 **Sports Counselling Centre** in every district that will spread awareness about different sports and counsel and assist aspiring young sportspersons.
09. We will allocate sufficient funds to **promote sports among girls** and women, persons with disabilities and disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Tribes.

# Appeal



India has suffered terribly over the last 5 years. We are stuck in a sluggish economy; we are stuck in joblessness; we are stuck in an unprecedented rural crisis; we are stuck in a divided society; and we are stuck in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. We have a lot of work to do to correct the harm done in the last 5 years to our people, our freedoms, our economy, our institutions, and our spirit of togetherness. The Congress is once again ready to take on this challenge and this responsibility.

We promise to repair the damage caused by a callous, divisive and deceitful BJP Government.

We promise to put India back on the path of growth and development, not take her backwards.

We promise to empower every man, woman and child, not inflict distress.

We promise to provide leadership that brings people together, not one which divides.

We are a party that lives up to its promises, not one that deceives you with hollow jumlas at election time. With us, you will be sure of a bright future filled with hope for you and your children.

It is now time for you to make a choice.

With utmost humility, faith in our capacity to deliver, and unflinching courage to take on every challenge, we appeal to you to join hands with the Congress. Let us rebuild India. Together, let us get India moving again.

**Remember:**

**We have delivered before.  
We will deliver again!**



## Indian National Congress



[www.inc.in](http://www.inc.in)

IndianNationalCongress

INCIndia

INCIndia

IndianNationalCongress

Published by

The All India Congress Committee  
24, Akbar Road, New Delhi  
PIN: 110001

Printed by

Samrat Offset, B88  
Okhla Phase 2, New Delhi  
PIN: 110020  
Total Qty: 5000