

PM wanted Rahul to learn governance under him

It was Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who wanted Congress general secretary Rahul Gandhi as a minister in his office - a move that he thought would be an apprenticeship for the ruling party's 'future prime minister.'

But the Amethi MP had different plans.

According to Congress party sources, Manmohan Singh had suggested that Rahul, who is seen as being groomed as the party's future prime ministerial candidate, could get a 'good training' at the Prime Minister's Office. His mother and Congress president Sonia Gandhi endorsed the idea, the sources said.

However, the 38-year-old MP declined to accept the offer. 'He told his mother that he wanted to strengthen the organisation, especially the youth wings of the party, before taking up any ministerial post,' said an informed source who did not wish to be identified.

'Rahul believes that the Congress's future heavily depends on its ability to penetrate the young vote bank. According to him, taking up ministerial responsibility would distract him from the job he has already taken up,' the source added.

Rahul, however, insisted that the council of ministers should have some young faces. Manmohan Singh has inducted Jyotiraditya Scindia and Jitin Prasada - two second generation Congress MPs - into his government in Sunday's cabinet reshuffle.

Manmohan Singh had earlier taken Rahul Gandhi along with him to Kabul during an official visit in August 2005. The young Gandhi had also accompanied his mother during her visit to China last year.

After becoming the general secretary in charge of Youth Congress and the National Students Union of India last year, Rahul has launched an aggressive exercise to draw more youths to the organisation. He has also undertaken tours in the backward regions of Orissa and Karnataka.

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