

Narasimha Rao responsible for Babri: Rahul Gandhi

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi Monday said the late prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao was responsible for the razing down of Babri Masjid in 1992 and the decline of the party in Uttar Pradesh.

Touring western Uttar Pradesh's sugar belt for the first time as part of the Congress' election campaign for the seven-phase assembly election, Rahul Gandhi said: 'My father (former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi) apprehending trouble told my mother that 'Were the Babri Masjid to be razed, I will stand there and get killed rather than allow the masjid to fall', he said speaking to newsmen during an informal conversation here, while sharing his homemade lunch at a road side dhaba between Khatauli and Muzaffarnagar, over 500 km from Lucknow.

He said: 'Babri Masjid would not have happened had any Gandhi family member been there.'

Rahul Gandhi refused to accept suggestions that the Congress' decline in Uttar Pradesh was a result of the rise of Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party. 'It is primarily due to an organisational weakness of the Congress party', he said, adding 'if India has to progress, Uttar Pradesh has to, - it cannot go on like this. It is very harmful for Uttar Pradesh. Any respectable politician cannot sit back and watch when two million people are involved.'

Gandhi set out for his tour three hours late on Monday because of the partial solar eclipse in the country, apprehending that religious minded people might not venture out on the streets. However, once he was out on the road there was a good turnout and people gave him an enthusiastic welcome, especially in Muslim-dominated Khatauli and Muzaffarnagar.

His attempt to woo Muslims of western Uttar Pradesh will see him visiting the Darululoom Deoband Monday evening where he is likely to interact with the residents over tea.

Since Gandhi's entry into western Uttar Pradesh there has been a perceptible change in the mood of the people towards the Congress. This was manifested in the presence of Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Mahendra Singh Tikait's son Rakesh Tikait joining him for a rally in Muzaffarnagar.

Faraz Ahmed (© IANS / India eNews)