

## **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Image Is Dead, He's Responsible For Second Wave, Says Rahul Ga**

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Rahul Gandhi, addressing a virtual press conference, said the second wave of COVID-19 is the "PM's responsibility".

*Rahul Gandhi accused PM Narendra Modi of "ignorance" on the virus. (File)*

**New Delhi (India):** Rahul Gandhi, in one of his sharpest attacks yet on the government's handling of Covid and the deadly second surge, said today that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was responsible for the second wave and that he "did not understand Covid at all". The Congress leader also predicted "multiple waves" in the country if vaccinations continued at the current pace. Soon after, the government hit back and declared that vaccinations would be completed before December this year.

"The first wave no one understood...but the second wave is the PM's responsibility. His stunts (nautanki)... His failure to fulfil his responsibilities is the reason for the second wave," the Congress leader said, addressing a virtual press conference.

"Unfortunately, the Prime Minister is an event manager. He cannot deal with more than one event at a time. Anything happens, he will organise an event and deal only with that. We cannot do with an event manager in such times. We need effective and speedy administration," he commented, also accusing PM Modi of "ignorance" on the virus.

Vaccines were the only permanent solution to Covid and lockdowns, social distancing and masks were temporary ones, Mr Gandhi said, stressing that without a proper vaccination strategy, India would witness multiple waves of infection. India, he said, had vaccinated only three per cent of its population, leaving the rest open to infection.

"I directly told the PM that if India does not sort out its vaccination strategy, there will be multiple waves since the virus adapts. The Prime Minister is the head of the country. He is responsible for its well-being. The buck stops with the Prime Minister. But the Prime Minister lives in a bubble... no one talks to him because of the way he handles things. So, in effect, the ship is moving without a clue," said the Congress leader, heaping blame on the PM.

"The PM is trying to repair his image but his image is gone... It is time the Prime Minister stands up and leads the nation. These are the times where he has to show his leadership, his courage, his strength. The Prime Minister must stand up and deliver... don't be afraid. Time has come to show what a good leader you are. So please deliver."

In the government's return fire, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar lashed out at Mr Gandhi's use of the word "nautanki" while targeting PM Modi.

"The Prime Minister is fighting Covid with the people of the country. And he uses words like nautanki, which is an insult to the nation and the people. The people have long put an end to their nautanki."

The minister said Mr Gandhi's words "confirmed that the Congress had indeed prepared a toolkit", referring to the BJP's allegations of an alleged "Congress toolkit" to discredit PM Modi and the government over Covid. The Congress has denied it and accused the BJP of circulating fake screenshots.

Mr Javadekar said: "Vaccinations in India will be complete in 2021 before December. If Rahul-ji is worried about vaccination then he should focus on Congress-ruled states where there are problems in the drive."

During a Q and A in his press conference, Mr Gandhi had been asked about reports of Congress-ruled states misreporting Covid death figures. "I spoke to the Chief Ministers of Congress-ruled states, told them that lying will only harm them. The reality needs to be accepted. Actual death numbers might be disturbing but we must stick to telling the truth," he replied.

- NDTV