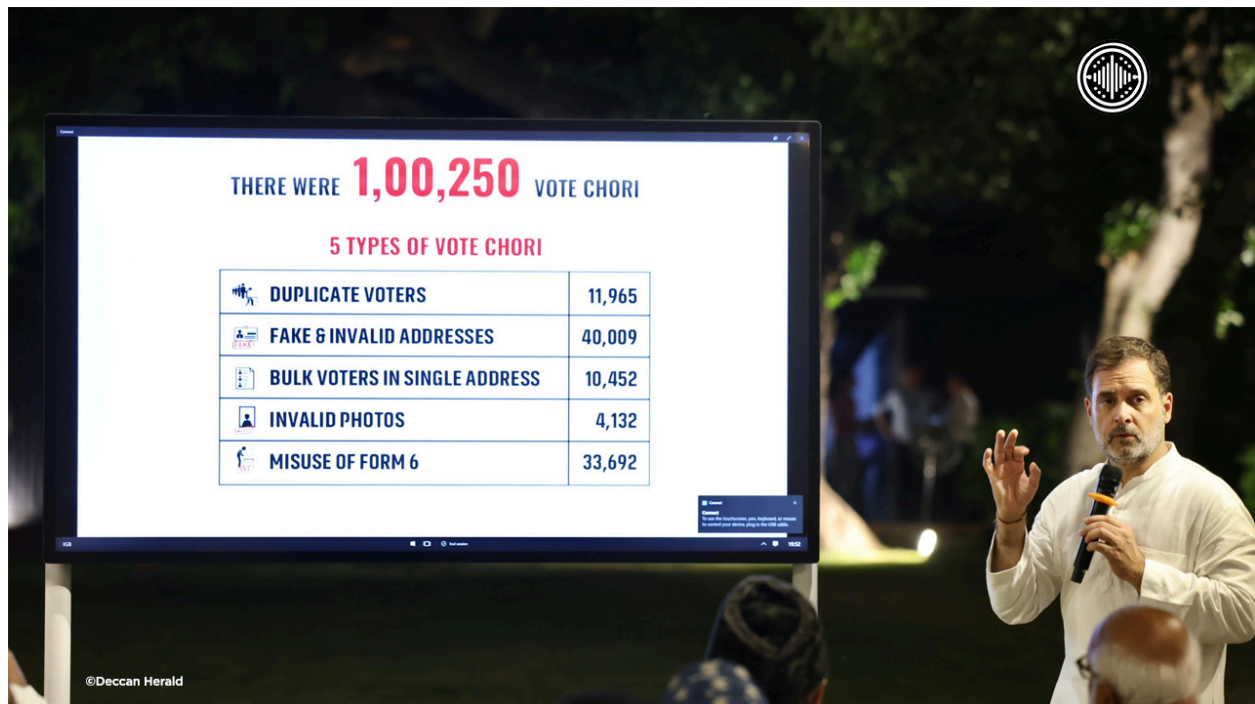


Opposition Leaders Convene at Rahul Gandhi's Dinner Meeting



Leaders from across India's political opposition gathered for a dinner meeting hosted by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday to strategize on key issues, including allegations of electoral fraud and the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar. The informal but high-profile meeting, held at Gandhi's residence, brought together around 50 leaders from 25 parties of the INDIA bloc. The gathering showcased a unified front as the opposition seeks to challenge the government on issues of democratic integrity.

A central point of discussion was a detailed presentation by Gandhi, where he laid out what he called a "blueprint" of electoral malpractices. Citing evidence from the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Gandhi made explosive claims of "vote chori" (vote theft), alleging a "huge criminal fraud" involving collusion between the ruling party and the Election Commission. He presented examples of irregularities in a Karnataka assembly segment, which he claimed included multiple registrations, fake addresses, and misuse of voter forms.

The meeting was described as "positive" by Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi, who stated that the same unity seen in Parliament was visible at the dinner. Other leaders present, including the National Conference's Farooq Abdullah and the Communist Party of India's (CPI) D. Raja and Rashtriya Janata Dal's (RJD) Tejashwi Yadav echoed this sentiment. Abdullah also used the

platform to raise the issue of statehood for Jammu and Kashmir and the recent ban on certain books in the region, calling the latter unconstitutional. Yadav briefed the group on the Bihar SIR exercise and the discrepancies in the draft electoral roll, announcing plans for the INDIA bloc to launch street protests on the issue beginning August 10.

Following the meeting, a smaller group of top leaders held a closed-door session to discuss the upcoming Vice-Presidential election. While no final decision was made, the leaders agreed in principle to field a candidate to ensure a contest, rather than giving the government a walkover. This meeting, the first physical gathering of the INDIA bloc in over a year, signals a renewed effort to coordinate strategies and present a united opposition to the government on multiple fronts.