

Congress submits start-ups blueprint to Centre

Arun Jaitley should start being a Finance Minister, says Jairam Ramesh

OUR BUREAU

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The Congress on Wednesday demanded that the Centre come up with a "clear and categorical" statement on net neutrality to help start-ups to access free internet. The party has given a six-point wish list to the Centre two days ahead of an event where the Modi government is expected to announce a start-up policy.

Party spokesperson and former Minister Jairam Ramesh told reporters that the Congress expects nothing but a repackaging of the UPA's schemes.

"Between 2004 and 2014, India received \$90 billion in venture capital and private equity financing for 4,000 companies, of which at least 2,000 may well have been start-ups. This had led to India becoming the third largest start-ups country in the world, even before Modi coined his 'Start Up India' slogan," he said.

Start-ups will play a major role in reviving the economy by providing job opportunities, he noted.

The Centre should make the programme a sound policy initiative based on the Congress's blueprint, he said, add-

A six-point agenda

- Internet access for all, and a clear timeframe to achieve that
- Government buildings, public universities and schools should be allowed to provide office space with power, connectivity and basic IT infrastructure to act as start-up incubators
- CSR funds should be permitted to be invested in start-ups and innovation research
- Quick and easy IP registration for entrepreneurs
- Direct or indirect funding of start-ups should be restricted to social sectors, to avoid risky use of taxpayer funds
- Centre should leverage National Skill Development Corporation to meet the huge semi-skilled labour needs of start-ups

ing that party vice-president Rahul Gandhi met 30 start-ups and assured them his support.

Slams Centre on economy

As the factory output and retail inflation data showed a downward trend of the economy, the Congress sharpened its attack on the Centre. Alleging that Prime Minister Na-

rendra Modi and Finance Minister Arun Jaitley are showing no interest in fiscal management, the party said growth is flat, exports are down, inflation is high, investment is down and industrial production is at historic lows.

Such a mishandling happened despite a windfall gain from the low prices of crude oil, said Ramesh.

He urged Jaitley to stop being a 'Narada Muni' and start being the Finance Minister.

"Between a PM who is more focused on a shameless personal PR campaign and an FM unable to give the requisite direction, the economy has been in a free fall," he said.

He said the Centre lost its command over the economy. "The Index of Industrial Production recorded a negative 3.2, which is the lowest in four years. This is the very barometer of PM's 'Make in India' dreams which is turning out to be a mere slogan just as everything else," he added.

"The rupee, which was at 58 to the dollar when Modi took charge, has slid to 67 to the dollar and continues to fall precipitously.

"At the rate at which it is going, we won't be surprised if it crosses the ages of the veterans he has retired to the BJP's Margdarshak Mandal," the Congress leader quipped.