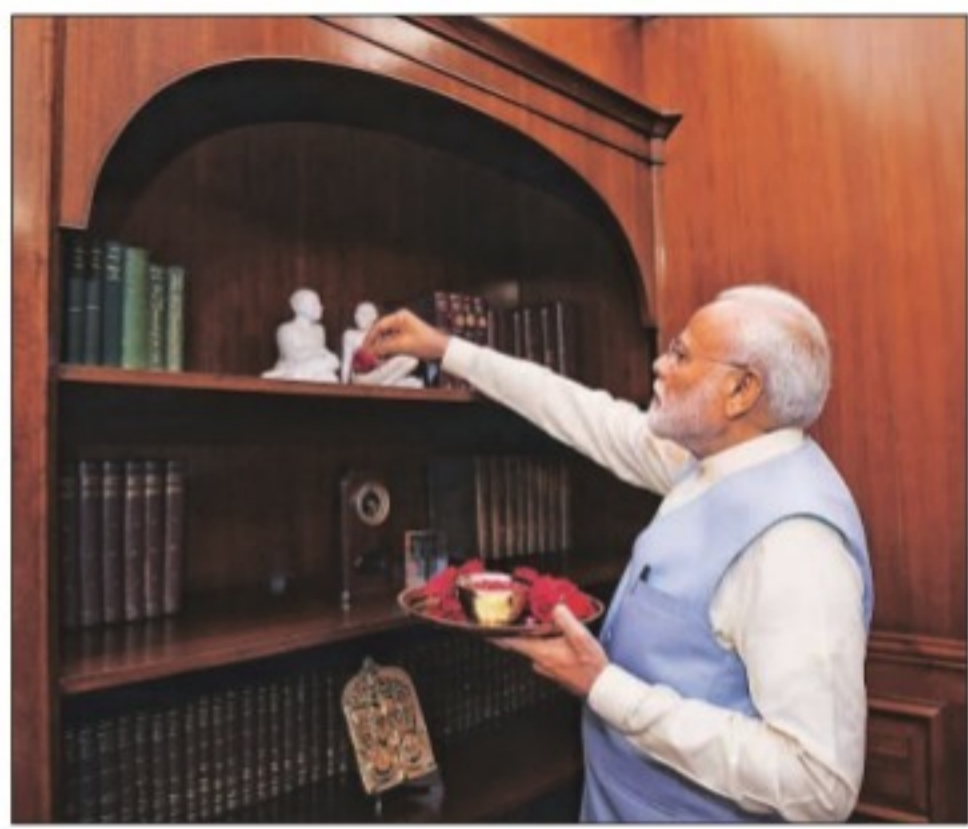


## NEW MINISTERS TAKE CHARGE

# The Government is in

### First up: Rs 6000/yr farm payout to all, PM scholarship hike



At the Prime Minister's Office, Friday. Via PIB



Nitin Gadkari, Rajnath Singh and Amit Shah after the first Cabinet meeting in New Delhi, Friday. Anil Sharma



## On Amit Shah table at Home: push and pull of manifesto, ministry

### Expected to push party line on NRC, J&K; pushback from states, ally JD(U)

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

BJP PRESIDENT Amit Shah was on Friday appointed as new Union Home Minister. He has replaced Rajnath Singh who has been moved to the Ministry of Defence. Having delivered multiple victories for the party in various states and then a landslide in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, this is the first ministerial responsibility that Shah will take on at the Centre.

Already known to be close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the portfolio of the Ministry of Home Affairs effectively makes him No. 2 in the government. Having learnt the political ropes through years of work in the RSS and the BJP in Gujarat, Shah will be expected to also push key ideological projects of the Sangh Parivar.

These could include faster rollout of National Register of Citizens and, perhaps, its appli-

cation in other states. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill could see a renewed push under his leadership. Issues of abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35 A in Kashmir could also see a more pro-active Home Ministry. As party chief, Shah's refrain was around issues related to national security, illegal immigration, special privileges available to Kashmir and border security — all hot button subjects that fall under the purview of his Ministry.

In several speeches in the run-up to the polls, Shah termed illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in Assam and West Bengal as "termites".

Notably, the BJP manifesto for 2019 polls makes clear the new government's commitment to these issues. On the issue of "Combating Infiltration", the manifesto said there had been a "huge change in the cultural and linguistic identity of some areas due to illegal immigration" and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

KRISHN KAUSHIK  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

## THE EDITORIAL PAGE

### INDIA SHOULD SPEED UP REFORMS

BY AMARTYA LAHIRI  
PAGE 12

## MODI 2.024

### NEW MINISTERS, KEY PORTFOLIOS

PAGE 10, 17

IN ITS first Cabinet meeting, the new government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday decided to extend the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme to all farmers across the country, regardless of the size of their landholding.

Announced ahead of the Lok Sabha elections in the Interim Budget this February, the scheme provided Rs 6,000 a year in income support — to be distributed in three instalments of Rs 2,000 each every four months — to small and marginal farmers, who owned 2 hectares or less.

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Friday's decision will increase the number of beneficiaries to 14.5 crore from 12.5 crore earlier, and will cost the government an additional Rs 12,000 crore. The total cost to the exchequer in 2019-20 under the PM-KISAN scheme is now estimated to be Rs 87,217.50 crore.

So far, funds have been credited in the bank accounts of 3.11 crore beneficiaries in the first instalment and 2.66 crore beneficiaries in the second instalment, according to data provided by the government.

Announcing the scheme, Union Minister for Agriculture, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Narendra Singh

Tomar said the decisions "demonstrate Prime Minister's commitment towards the farmers".

The Cabinet also announced a pension scheme for small and marginal farmers, retailers, traders and the self-employed, which will ensure them a monthly income of Rs 3,000 after they turn senior citizens at 60. Calling them "landmark decisions in the very first meeting of the new Cabinet" Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, and Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar said, "Jo wada kiya uska amal aaj se shuru hua (we have started delivering on the promises made)".

For the small and marginal farmers between 18 years and 40

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Sitharaman gets Finance, task cut out: at 5.8%, lowest growth in 20 quarters

AANCHAL MAGAZINE & SUNNY VERMA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN took charge as India's first woman full-time Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Friday and her task seems cut out. Data on GDP released within a few hours of her occupying the seat in North Block showed the growth rate for January-March 2019 slipping to 5.8 per cent compared to 8.1 per cent in the corresponding period last year.

This is the lowest growth rate in 20 quarters and puts India behind China after almost two years. The rate was lower than this at 5.3 per cent in the last quarter of UPA II or January-March 2013-14.

For the full year 2018-19, the economy is estimated to have slowed down to 6.8 per cent, lower than the original estimate of 7 per cent and 7.2 per cent recorded in 2017-18.

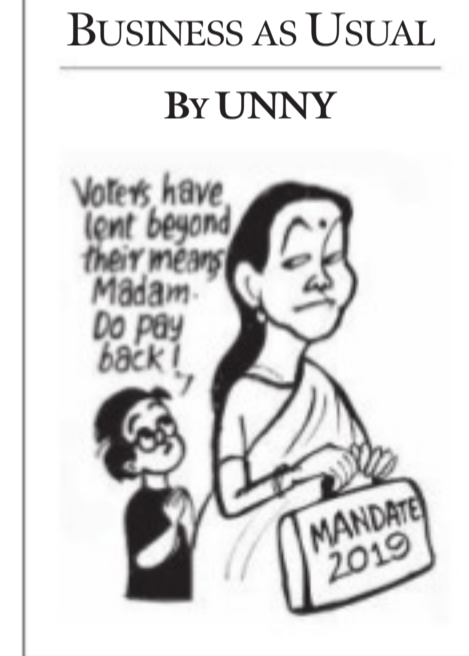
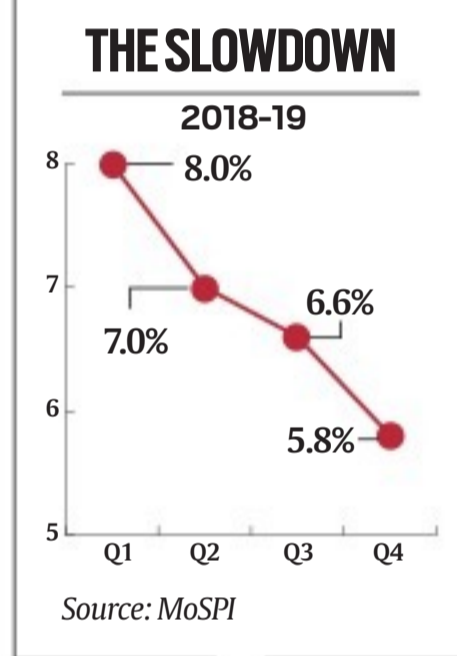
During the last financial year, growth rates sequentially dropped from 8 per cent in Q1



Nirmala Sitharaman moves from Defence to Finance.  
Prem Nath Pandey

to 7 per cent in Q2 to 6.6 per cent in Q3 and 5.8 per cent in Q4. This reflected in other leading indicators such as automobile sales, factory output and core sector growth.

With the liquidity crisis in the NBFC sector yet to be comprehensively addressed, consumer expenditure, including discretionary spending, has been adversely impacted. Private investment has remained weak during the year, also consistently dropping over the last three quarters from 9.8



per cent in Q2 to 8.4 per cent in Q3 and 7.2 per cent in Q4.

The slowdown is accompanied by weakness on the job front too, with the unemployment rate for 2017-18 at 6.1 per cent, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), also released Friday along with GDP data. This report was withheld by the government despite being cleared by the National Statistical Commission, an autonomous body, in December 2018.

The economic slowdown

spells a challenge for the government in its second term since there is limited fiscal room to boost growth through higher government expenditure. There will be higher expectations from the RBI to push growth by front-loading policy rate cuts. Economists expect the RBI to cut the rate in its upcoming review next Thursday. 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' sector's Gross Value Added (GVA) growth contracted 0.1 per cent in January-March

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## WORLD



### DECISIVE ACTION NEEDED TO DETER IRAN: SAUDI ARABIA

### SALE OF N-SECRETS: PAK JAILS LT GEN FOR LIFE, WILL HANG SCIENTIST AND BRIGADIER

PAGE 14

## Why having one Minister for Rural Development & Agri is key step forward

HARISH DAMODARAN  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

THE APPOINTMENT of Narendra Singh Tomar as Union Minister in charge of both agriculture and rural development marks the start of an effort to integrate two departments that have tended to work in isolation with markedly varying performance. The Narendra Modi government's track record on rural development has been considered generally good. During 2014-15

EXPLAINED

to 2018-19, about 1.55 crore houses and 2.18 lakh km of all-weather roads were built in rural India under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, respectively.

Further, 9.58 crore toilets have been constructed under Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin since October 2, 2014; 11.28 crore new active LPG connections given out since April 2015 (mainly courtesy the Ujjwala scheme); and the number of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Now in MEA as boss, Jaishankar faces a little diplomacy within

SHUBHAJIT ROY  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

SIXTEEN MONTHS after he retired and left the office of Foreign Secretary in South Block to lead a private life, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar returned Friday to assume charge as the new External Affairs Minister. The offices of both, incidentally, are located on the first floor of South Block.

The significance of the Prime Minister turning to Jaishankar, after the exit of Sushma Swaraj, is not lost on anyone. He is the first former Foreign Secretary to become a Cabinet minister, that too for the prestigious Raisina



Jaishankar with Foreign Secy Vijay Gokhale, Friday.  
Praveen Khanna

Hill portfolio.

While K Natwar Singh, a career diplomat for 30 years, also became Foreign Minister two decades after quitting the Indian Foreign Service, he had joined the Congress whereas Jaishankar has not taken the political route and is a lateral entry, in letter and spirit.

As an insider till over a year ago — unlike Natwar Singh who quit in 1984 as a Secretary in the MEA and became a Minister in 2004 — Jaishankar knows the system too well. While that is an asset, it also means that he knows the weaknesses in personnel and the systems, and

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## PAGE 1 ANCHOR

# After Swachh Bharat, in the pipeline: Jal Shakti, Nal Se Jal for all

SHALINI NAIR  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

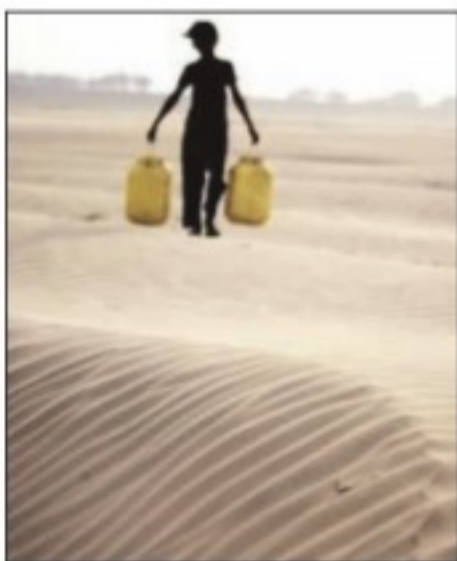
AFTER THE country-wide sanitation drive with the Swachh Bharat Mission in the first term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to shift focus to the allied issue of water as his second term begins.

Enter the Ministry of Jal Shakti. Led by Rajasthan MP Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, the new ministry has set the ball rolling for the government's ambitious plans to provide piped water connections to every

household in India by 2024. According to sources, the Jal Shakti ministry merges the ministries of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation along with Drinking Water and Sanitation to bring all aspects of water management and regulation under one department.

The scheme 'Nal Se Jal' to provide piped drinking water to every household will be a component of the government's Jal Jiban Mission. This was among the primary promises made in the BJP's vision document released in the run-up to the 2019

Lok Sabha elections. Officials in the know said that drinking water accounts for only 4 per cent of the water used in the country while agriculture accounts for 80 per cent of all water including groundwater. Sources told *The Indian Express*, "It doesn't help that there are very few groundwater regulatory bodies since this matter comes under the state. The present approach to water conservation is pushed through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) and driven by the provision of work and not geared at address-



Jodhpur MP Shekhawat gets charge of Jal Shakti Ministry

ing the issue of water management itself."

"The setting up of a separate ministry will give water conservation measures the much-needed impetus it deserves." Officials said that over the last several months, there have been a slew of meetings between Israeli government officials and some of the concerned ministries and the NITI Aayog to explore ways to collaborate on water conservation efforts and technology sharing.

"Unlike India, Israel is largely urban and it has been able to implement metered water connec-

tions, something that will take a lot of political will in India," said an official.

Since water as a subject is spread across several ministries, there was never a comprehensive plan to address the country's water crisis, officials said, adding that even the maps of water sources are not all available in one place.

According to a 2018 NITI Aayog report, "600 million Indians face high to extreme water stress and about two lakh people die every year due to inadequate access to safe water. By 2030, the country's water de-

mand is projected to be twice the available supply, implying severe water scarcity for hundreds of millions of people and an eventual -6% loss in the country's GDP."

The creation of the Jal Shakti Ministry was indicated in the interim budget of the NDA government and in the many speeches by the Prime Minister during the election campaign where he promised to take up access to safe drinking water once re-elected.

Referring to Jal Shakti, the BJP's vision document said, "Water is a critical resource but

its management is spread across various departments, even at the Central level. We will form a new Ministry of Water unifying the water management functions to approach the issue of water management holistically and ensure better coordination of efforts."

It also said that such a ministry will look at conservation of surface and groundwater as well as fast-track late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's proposed solution to ease the irrigation and drinking water crisis by inter-linking rivers across the country.