

# 13 THE GOVERNANCE PAGE



**M.A. PUBLIC POLICY**

2 Years Masters Programme

**O.P. JINDAL GLOBAL UNIVERSITY**  
(DELHI-NCR)

+91 839 690 7494 | www.jsgp.edu.in



**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

## Punjab govt equips disabled women to run e-rickshaws, support their families

Selects and trains 42 women to earn a livelihood; Hoshiarpur is the first district to launch the scheme

**ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA**  
JALANDHAR, FEBRUARY 16

JASWINDER KAUR, in her early 30s, had never known how to ride even a bicycle, let alone a vehicle of any kind. But she has become one of the first women e-rickshaw drivers in Punjab. Now she drives an 8-seater e-rickshaw with confidence. Jaswinder is a mother of two children and both she and her husband suffer from a disability in their legs. She has passed the Class 10th exam but was unemployed. She chose to earn a living by playing an e-rickshaw because this way she could start earning without making any initial investment.

"I don't feel bad when anyone looks at me. Rather it makes me happy that I am doing something a little different from the rest," she said when asked how she felt entering a male-dominated field. Jaswinder said, thanks to more women taking up driving e-rickshaws, people will soon get used to women drivers.

She is correct in saying that she is not alone. Rekha Rani, a widow having three kids, too is learning to ferry passengers in her auto. After the death of her husband in a road accident in 2016, Rekha took up tailoring to take care of her family. But the earnings were barely enough to provide two square meals. "When I saw an advertisement in a paper about women e-rickshaw driver, I applied because I have no money to start any of my work and here the government was to provide e-rickshaws," said Rekha.

Like Jaswinder and Rekha, 40 other differently-abled women, aged between 20 to 50 have become e-rickshaw drivers in Hoshiarpur district, which is the first district of Punjab that has launched a women e-rickshaw driver project.

The project is the brainchild of the Punjab Industry Minister, Sunder Sham Arora, who is based out of Hoshiarpur, and the district administration.

Women are plying these autos in the Roshan Ground and around by carrying the passengers during their 10 days training programme, which is being provided by the district administration. All the women were selected



Women e-rickshaw drivers being provided training at the Roshan ground in Hoshiarpur Express

**EXPLAINED**

### Livelihood and empowerment

MOST OF the women chosen by the Punjab government to receive training for driving the e-rickshaws come from economically-weaker sections of the society. Further, almost all of them find it difficult to earn money because of some physical disability. By training these women, the government hopes to provide them not just with a means of livelihood but also a sense of empowerment.

through the interview recently. Arora handed over a cheque of Rs 51 lakh to the district administration recently — this money, in turn, was the contribution of businesses. Already 42 e-rickshaws have been purchased by the administration costing around Rs 10 lakh each, and Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh has waived off the imposition of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on these e-rickshaws, according to Arora.

In the first phase, autos were provided to 42 women after a selection process led by Isha Kalia, the former Deputy Commissioner of Hoshiarpur who has been recently transferred. Kalia said that the chosen women will ply on several routes in the city after they have completed their training.

But, what is the reason behind this project? Arora replied, "I wanted to empower womenfolk in every field and thought about this unique project which is quite easy to handle and it can earn a fair amount (of money) to provide a good life to the families of these poor women".

"For safety and security, all the women's e-rickshaws would be equipped with GPS-enabled systems, and their location can be monitored any time from the control room. Also, these e-rickshaws will be run within the city area," said Arora. He added that all women have also been given mobile phones so that they can connect with each other and with

the administration easily. He said that another phase of it would also be launched soon.

Kalia said that this project will make women more confident and they will become an inspiration for the many unemployed men and women. She said that these are eco-friendly battery-operated rickshaws and two battery charging stations are also being set up in the city.

Shelly, a divorcee and educated up to primary level, another woman e-rickshaw driver, said that after the death of her father she had to take care of her mother, sister and her 10-year-old physically-challenged son.

"This is the best job for me because the e-rickshaw is very easy to drive," she said.

**THE BIG STORY**

## 'Reservation is a Constitutional right and nobody can end it'

RAM VILAS Paswan, Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, says reservation is a constitutional right and nobody can end it. He spoke to HARIKISHAN SHARMA on the recent ruling of the Supreme Court and the demand for the creation of an Indian Judicial Service.



**THE POLICY INTERVIEW**  
**RAM VILAS PASWAN**  
Union Minister for Consumer Affairs

**What is your view on SC's recent ruling that states are not bound to provide reservation in government jobs and that quota is not a fundamental right?**

Reservation is a Constitutional right and nobody can end it. Whenever the matter of the reservation came in the Parliament, all the parties supported it. The latest example is the meeting of the SC and ST MPs that took place at my residence; about 70 MPs participated in it. The meeting was attended by not just the members of the BJP and its allies but also by the members of other parties such as the Congress, the DMK and Shiv Sena as well. All the MPs were very angry as to why the SC had said that reservation is not a fundamental right. Given the fact that Article 16(4) of the Constitution has a provision for reservations.

Reservation in promotion is available for the SC and ST only but the reservation in government jobs is now available to the SC, ST, OBC and the weaker sections of the upper castes. But the SC has said both things; first, if the state wants it can give reservation or it can choose otherwise; second, that reservation is not a fundamental right. If the reservation is not a fundamental right then what is Article 16(4)?

**Isn't Article 16(4) an enabling provision?**

When it is only enabling reservation they how can upper caste get a reservation? When there is an SC ruling that reservation cannot go beyond 50% then how it reached up to 60%? At the time of the Mandal Commission, there was a proposal to give 10% reservation on the basis of the economic criteria but the SC rejected it saying there is no provision in the Constitution for it. But this time it became a reality because the NDA government amended the Constitution first. So, reservation is already a fundamental right. How can you say that it's not? Second, when a 9-member Bench in the Mandal Commission case said that reservation is a Constitutional provision they how can a 2-member Bench say that it is not Constitutional?

**What is the way out?**

All MPs, who attended the meeting, were of the view that either the government should bring an ordinance or enact a law as done in case of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes

(Prevention of Atrocities) Act. Whether a Constitutional amendment or a separate law is required, it should take all the necessary steps. Our party is also contemplating filing a petition seeking a review of the recent SC ruling... No one can end the reservation. Yab patthar ki lakir hai (it's indelible). Now it has been extended to the poor sections of the upper castes also. So, now no one can end the reservation.

**Do you see any reason behind the SC making such observations?**

All the MPs, who attended the meeting, demanded reservation in judiciary and creation of the Indian Judicial Service (IJS) because whenever a matter related to the weaker sections goes to the Court, it gets stuck.

**Will the govt accept the demand for IJS?**

The Centre has given a positive reply about IJS in the Parliament. The government is seriously considering the proposal.

**So, you want IJS with reservation?**

Article 312 of the Constitution provides for the creation of an all-India Judicial Service. It should be on the line of the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service and the selection process of the IJS should be transparent and through a competitive examination with proper reservation.

**Do you support the creation of IJS?**

I support it on two counts. First, because the present system of collegium lacks transparency. Second, it will have representation from all sections of society.

**FROM STATES REFORMS TRACKER**

**MADHYA PRADESH**

Private investments to create 14,000 jobs

LAST WEEK, the state government has announced that private firms will put in more than Rs 3,000 crore-worth investments in the state. According to an official document, these investments can potentially generate 14,000 employment opportunities. The announcement in this regard was made by Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath during the textile and garment sector roundtable.

**DELHI**

Mohalla clinics set to be replicated elsewhere

WHILE THE AAP's thumping victory in Delhi polls is being projected as validation of its development model, several state governments have already taken a cue from the Arvind Kejriwal dispensation's flagship Mohalla clinic scheme and are replicating it. It is being said that the opening of nearly 500 Mohalla clinics since 2015, where doctor consultation, medicines and lab tests can be availed free of cost, played a vital role in tilting the balance in favour of AAP in the recently-concluded elections. Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Telangana, Karnataka and UT of Jammu and Kashmir have already announced that they would be replicating the initiative.

**TELANGANA**

State poll panel uses a face-recognition app

THE FIRST-of-its-kind facial recognition app used in the recently concluded municipal polls in Telangana yielded an accuracy of 80 per cent, officials have claimed. The Telangana State Election Commission used a facial recognition app in a bid to counter impersonation of voters.

## Gujarat CM's Mokla Mane: citizen interaction forum also resolves old complaints of people

**PARIMAL DABHI**  
GANDHINAGAR, FEBRUARY 16

IN AUGUST 2019, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani launched an initiative under which he started meeting — once a month — different sections of society to have an open discussion on the issues concerning them. The initiative, titled Mukhyamantri Sathe, Mokla Mane (With the Chief Minister, with an open mind), has not only caught the attention of the people but also proved to be a catalyst towards some key welfare decisions by the government.

In the months since, Rupani has held interactions with people from different strata of the society like urban slum dwellers, award-winning teachers, Divyang or specially-abled persons, and nomadic & denotified tribes etc.

Secretary to the CM, Ashwani Kumar said the interaction is like an open dialogue about knowing each other better. "If some decision



CM Rupani during an interaction Express

is taken during and after this interaction, it is a by-product, but the objective is not that of people asking something and the CM giving something," he clarified.

Additional PRO to the CM, Hitesh Pandya

said: "The CM himself decides the group of people that he would interact with... We shortlist around 60-75 names for the final programme. The selection gets done in a manner that every district gets equal representation".

Shantabhai Bamanिया from Kharaghoda of Surendranagar district is a salt pan worker and visited the CM house for the first time last year.

"I felt very happy after visiting the CM House. We spent one full day there, had a meal there and even got photographed with the CM," said Bamanिया.

"More importantly, one of our problems got resolved after the visit. A hostel near our village was (by rule) not enrolling students beyond Class VIII. I raised the issue with the CM during the interaction as our kids had to leave school education because there was no hostel for students of Class IX onwards. The issue was resolved very soon. Now our kids can study beyond Class VIII," Bamanिया added.

**CHHATTISGARH/EDUCATION REFORMS**

## Tribal languages to be a medium of education in pre-school

**GARGI VERMA**  
RAIPUR, FEBRUARY 16

INSTEAD OF "aa se aam", children in the tribal regions of Chhattisgarh will soon be learning "aa se aak patta (peepal or sacred fig leaf)". In around 19,000 anganwadis across the state, the Chhattisgarh government is going to start teaching pre-school children in 10 different tribal languages.

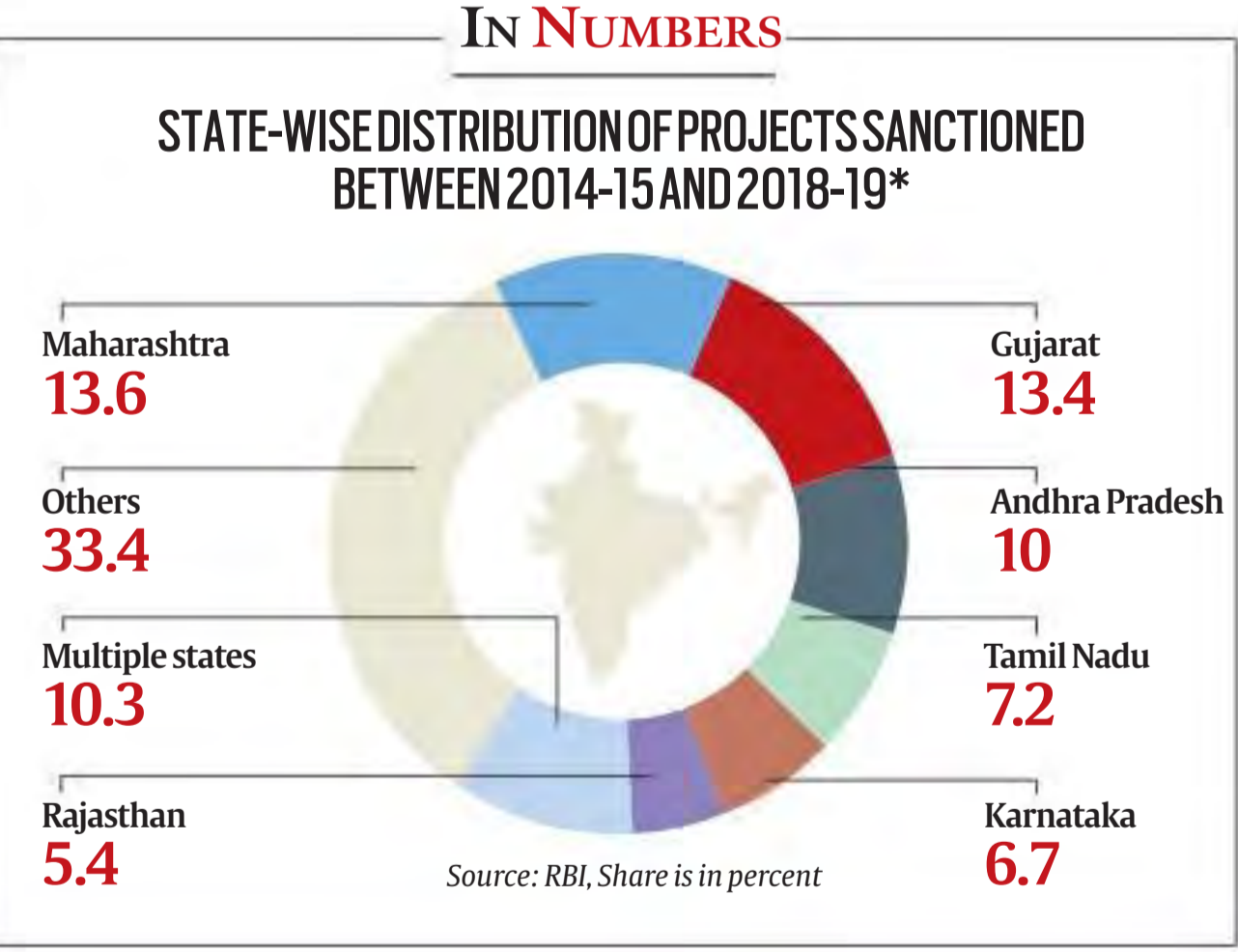
The brainchild of Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, the programme was announced by him at the Republic day parade in Jagdalpur. In a state where 32% of the total population belongs to Scheduled Tribes, the decision is expected to not only provide comfort but also to save these tribal languages.

"We first made a linguistic map of each district and the languages spoken in the region; then we mad a linguistic map of the state. The ten languages we have included in



Pre-school students in Chhattisgarh will soon be taught in their language Express

this program are Gondi, Halbi, Madiya, Bhatra, Dhurva, Dorli, Singrauliya, Sarguijiya, Sadri and Kudukh," said Siddharth Komal Pardeshi, Secretary, Women and Child Development Department. Among other responsibilities, the angan-



wadis work as the pre-primary schools for children. However, the medium of education was Hindi. "For the first time, we don't have to train our frontline workers. All the anganwadi teachers are well versed in their regional language. They connect to the people in those languages. In fact, we have been taking their help to design the books and teaching material," Pardeshi said.

"There is no script in most Adivasi languages, they are phonetically driven. In 2018, a dictionary in Gondi was released by Kannada University in Hampi. There is a need to preserve these languages and to ensure that children who have grown up speaking such languages don't feel left out at schools," Dada Jokal, an author of several books in Gondi and who now teaches school teachers the language, said.

The linguistic divide in the state has been brought forth time and again by officials. In 2015, the previous government had planned

to train the officials in Gondi, a plan that stopped before it began. In 2019, police started training their men in the Gondi language to fight the Left Wing Extremists better. "In schools, teachers often have a hard time connecting with students because of the language divide. I had an interesting case, when a primary school teacher approached me that the children just kept repeating what he said, without understanding a word. They would keep repeating his questions at him, thinking that was their lesson. This is because of language barriers, which other linguistically prosperous states have understood and exploited," Dada Jokal said.

According to education expert Ujjwala Shankar, the idea of ensuring pre-primary and primary education in one's mother tongue is necessary for many reasons. "When the course imparted is in a language that the child is already familiar, the interest to learn more increases," she said.