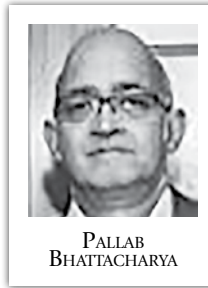


The Modi government's image makeover



PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

POLITICS, particularly electoral politics, in India is as much about public perception as about the quality of governance.

This comes out quite clearly in Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's major expansion of his council of ministers and reshuffle of portfolios on Wednesday night.

The exercise—the first since Modi returned to power for a second successive tenure as PM in May 2019—saw 36 new ministers coming in, four high-profile senior ministers and Bharatiya Janata Party leaders getting the axe, seven junior ministers being elevated to the cabinet rank, and seven women rewarded with ministerial berths. However, the big four portfolios and the people helming them remain unaffected by the reshuffle—the Ministers of Home (Amit Shah), Defence (Rajnath Singh), Foreign Affairs (S Jaishankar) and Finance (Nirmala Sitharaman).

In the hugely diverse mosaic of Indian society where national elections and state-level polls follow each other in quick succession, the poll politics of a national party like the BJP is always at the back of its mind. The party needs to get its caste, age, gender and regional calculus right in its organisational structure and shape the ministerial council, whether at the central or state level. Equally significant is the need to deliver in terms of governance. Modi tried to strike a balance between all these factors in his mega cabinet reboot to deal with severe criticism, both at home

and abroad, as the country emerges from a devastating second wave of Covid-19 ahead of key elections in five states in the next couple of years, followed by the most crucial parliamentary poll in 2024.

In the run up to Modi's anointment as PM in 2014, he had repeatedly and passionately talked about "minimum government and maximum governance". Whatever way one interprets that, the fact is that numerically, the strength

educational qualifications in choosing his refurbished team of ministerial colleagues; and he has done caste arithmetic ahead of assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh (UP), Gujarat, Tripura and Karnataka next year. Though going for a more youthful look, Modi has also kept in mind the need for experienced administrators. That is why he also brought in his cabinet former chief ministers Sarbananda Sonowal of Assam

What came as a little surprising is the exit of Prasad, who was seen as the main force behind the government's new rules for multinational social media platforms like Twitter, which opposed the rules, and Facebook.

That caste equations were also a major consideration for Modi, keeping in view electoral needs in UP and Gujarat, is underlined by the fact that he inducted 27 people belonging

trying to reach out to the numerically powerful Yadav caste is demonstrated by the accommodation of senior BJP leader Bhopender Yadav from UP, Annapurna Yadav from Jharkhand, and Dalit Virender Kumar from Madhya Pradesh in the ministerial council, in which the presence of people from Scheduled Tribes has also gone up by eight.

The caste equation was also very much in play in the elevation of Mansukh Mandaviya and Parshotam Rupala from minister of state to cabinet status. Both belong to the electorally decisive Patidar community of Modi's home state of Gujarat where assembly polls are due next year. The BJP is mindful of how it got a hard-fought victory in the previous polls in Gujarat in 2017.

The cabinet reboot has also seen some people with professional backgrounds and PhDs and MBA degrees getting in. The most prominent in the technocrat-bureaucrat category is the presence of former Indian Administrative Service officer from Odisha Ashini Vaishnav, who had quit government service to join the corporate sector before venturing into politics. Holding M.Tech and MBA degrees, Vaishnav has been brought in as a cabinet minister and given charge of two key portfolios—Railway, and Telecom and IT. Another MBA-holding new inductee in the ministerial council is Anupriya Patel, the Lok Sabha MP from Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh who worked as a professor at a private university.

Keeping in mind the large number of the women electorate, seven women were inducted in the ministerial council this time, pushing up the total number of women to 11, one of the highest ever. When the Modi cabinet took oath in 2019, it was criticised for low representation of women, with only three cabinet ministers and three ministers of state. There were nine women in the first Modi government from 2014-2019, including six in the cabinet.

Lastly, the drafting in of four BJP lawmakers from West Bengal—two of them from the northern part of the state where the saffron party has so far successfully resisted the efforts of Trinamool Congress—also shows the Modi-led party's intention to stick to its elusive state dream. Only the politically-naïve had expected the BJP to win the recent assembly poll in Bengal, the party top leadership's hype in the run up to the election notwithstanding.

Pallab Bhattacharya is a special correspondent of The Daily Star. He writes from New Delhi, India.



The Modi cabinet reshuffle and departure of the health minister comes in the wake of a huge public outcry against the government's handling of the second wave of Covid-19.

PHOTO: REUTERS/SAMUEL RAJKUMAR

The inclusion of 27 Other Backward Class (OBC) ministers shrinks the caste bias in favour of the representation of forward castes in the government. It is the politically powerful and populous OBC, to which Modi himself belongs, that the BJP is hoping to rely on to retain its support base.

of his council of ministers today is 77—nearly half of whom are new. As India emerges from the battering of the pandemic's second wave and economic slide, which started much before that, it is the quality rather than the numerical factor that will matter. Modi clearly has a challenge at hand.

Three main features of the revamp of the council of ministers stand out: Modi has gone for a much younger look, with the average age of ministers coming down to 57 from 61 years; he has junked seniority in the party as the sole yardstick by dropping a number of senior ministers who are also BJP veterans like Harsh Vardhan, Ravi Shankar Prasad and Prakash Javadekar, and brought in that of

and Narayan Rane of Maharashtra, and former central minister under the Congress government Jyotiraditya Scindia.

The fact that 20 percent of the ministers in the council had been dropped before Wednesday's expansion sent out the message that it was performance-linked. The departure of Harsh Vardhan as health minister was on the back of a huge public outcry against the Modi government's handling of the oxygen crisis during the second wave of Covid-19, in the run up to which the pace of setting up oxygen plants slowed down and ventilators bought through the PM CARES fund could not be used in many hospitals due to the shortage of trained manpower.

to the Other Backward Class (OBC) on Wednesday into the 78-strong ministerial council, with the idea of involving smaller communities in a bid to counter the BJP's main rivals like the Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party in UP, and Congress in Gujarat. The inclusion of 27 OBC ministers shrinks the caste bias in favour of the representation of forward castes in the government. It is the politically powerful and populous OBC, to which Modi himself belongs, that the BJP is hoping to rely on to retain its support base.

The BJP is keen to woo non-Yadav castes like Kurmis in UP, and it is reflected by the induction of Anupriya Patel of ally Apna Dal and RCP Singh of Janata Dal (United). That it is also

 SYLHET CITY CORPORATION Nagar Bhaban, Sylhet. www.scc.gov.bd		 উন্নয়নের পপ্তর দেশে হাদিনার মুদনর									
Memo No: 46.07.0000.020.14.137.21-06		Date: 07/07/2021									
REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) FOR CONSULTING FIRM											
Sealed Expression of Interest (EOI) is hereby invited from among the eligible Architectural & Engineering Consulting firms. The detailed of EOI is shown in the table below.											
1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of the Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives/Local Government Division.									
2	Agency	Sylhet City Corporation.									
3	Procurement Entity Name	Mayor, Sylhet City Corporation.									
4	Procuring Entity District	Sylhet.									
5	Expression of Interest for selection of consulting firm for construction of	Monument for Muktiyuddha Chatter at Kadamtoli under Sylhet City Corporation									
6	EOI reference No.	46.07.0000.020.14.137.21-06									
7	Date	07-07-2021									
Key Information											
8	Procurement Method	FBS (FIXED BUDGET SELECTION) METHOD.									
9	Name of work	Proposed Construction of Monument for Muktiyuddha Chatter at Kadamtoli under Sylhet City Corporation									
Funding Information											
10	Budget and source of Funds	CITY CORPORATION OWN FUND.									
11	Development Partners	N/A									
12	EOI Submission Date, Time & Place	05-08-2021, Time: -2.00 pm at the office room of Chief Engineer, Sylhet City Corporation.									
13	EOI opening date and time	05/08/2021, Time: -3.00 pm									
14	EOI Receiving Office	Office of the Chief Engineer, Room no- 401, Level-4, Nagar Bhaban, Sylhet City Corporation.									
Information for Applicant											
15	Brief Description of Assignment	The services must be included but not limited to: a) Preparation of lay-out plan including soil test report, preliminary architectural conceptual drawing, on the basis of city corporation actual requirement, planning (elevation, different section) including Landscape & perspective view (3D view) for the entire works of proposed MONUMENT for approval by the competent authority. b) After approval of preliminary drawing, appointed consultant will prepare the detail architectural plan with perspective view (3D view) of the monument (plan, elevation & sectional view), structural, electrical, exterior design & drawing with detail calculation including any other ancillary work. c) Preparation of detail working drawing with all relevant measurements d) Preparation of detailed estimated cost, bill of quantities (BOQ) & calculation sheet of BOQ, tender document with contractual random supervision. e) Submission of all drawings in printed form at least 05 sets along with soft copy.									
16	Brief Description of the Assignment	Consultancy services have been required for architectural & structural design & drawing of Monument for Muktiyuddha Chatter at Kadatoli under Sylhet City Corporation at the road intersection in order to make sure of remembering the memory of independence 1971 and the Freedom fighter along with Martyrs of the generous freedom fight.									
17	Qualification & Experience	a) The intending consulting firms must have adequate number of qualified structural engineer, architect, engineer & other technical key staff with logistic support to carry out the architectural & structural planning,									
18	Other details	The EOIs would be reviewed on the basis of the following information of firm such as: (A) Copies of registration certificate(s) (B) Age of the firm (C) Turnover (D) Support services of the consulting firms. (E) Availability of key professional staff with the experience of similar work/assignments (F) Availability of key professional staff with the experience of other work/assignments (G) Experience of the consulting firms in similar assignments. (H) Experience of the consulting firms in other assignments.									
19	Procuring Entity Details :	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Name of Official inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI)</td> <td>Engr. Md. Abdul Aziz</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Designation of official inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI)</td> <td>Superintending Engineer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Address of Official inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI)</td> <td>Sylhet City Corporation, Sylhet.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contact details of official inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI)</td> <td>0821-714036</td> </tr> </table>		Name of Official inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI)	Engr. Md. Abdul Aziz	Designation of official inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI)	Superintending Engineer	Address of Official inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI)	Sylhet City Corporation, Sylhet.	Contact details of official inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI)	0821-714036
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Contact details of official inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI)	0821-714036										
20	The Expression of Interest (EOI) in 2 (Two) sets (one original & one duplicate) shall be submitted in sealed envelope.										
21	Interested consulting firms may obtain further information in all working days from the address mentioned above.										
22	The procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject all EOIs without assigning any reasons.										

07.7.21.
 (Engr. Md. Abdul Aziz)
 Superintending Engineer
 Sylhet City Corporation.