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FORTNIGHTLY BULLETIN



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MAMATA ON A STRONG WICKET

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Don't play spoilsport!....

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With the government being buffeted by one political storm or the other, not to mention an unprecedented number of scandals involving corruption in the highest echelons of power, all sections of the society have been clamouring for increased transparency and accountability in government functioning. Ironically, even in these days of the media and societal spotlight being firmly turned on to the functioning of those in power, there is one proposed law arguing for precisely that that seems to have died an unnatural and premature death with scantily anyone mourning it.

their tenures to three terms in a row (12 years). This, too, naturally met opposition from the geriatric club of India's sports body presidents. Without any age limit to control them, chief executives of these federations start treating these bodies as their personal fiefdom to the detriment

Methodology:

National representative sample of 1183 randomly selected respondents by CATI across 28 states in India during 1st & 2nd September 2011. Data weighted to known census profile. Margin of error +/-3% at national level.



The new Sports Bill as proposed by Ajay Maken had many merits to it. One of the main provisions of the Bill was to bring all sports bodies, including the cash-rich cricket giant the BCCI, under the RTI. This was reportedly vociferously objected to by the Cabinet, five members of which are in charge of various sports bodies. Not surprisingly, these members want to control without scrutiny all the cash-rich sports organizations in the country and those which have the potential to ring in more money as international and domestic interest in sports as a major form of entertainment for the young heats up. Another regulation of the proposed Bill was to set a retirement age at 70 for the presidents of sports federations, and cap

of Indian sport, as we have all seen it. Various players and sportspersons themselves had supported the Bill but with political might against them, what chance do they have of finding a voice, forget control, in the very arenas they contribute so much to. The present government has powerful ministers who also hold important charges in sports bodies elsewhere: These include ICC President Sharad Pawar, Mumbai Cricket Association chief Vilas-

Do you believe that Manmohan Singh's Cabinet will ever pass this kind of strict Bill?

	Valid Percent
Can't Say	26.9
Yes	43.3
No	29.8
Total	100

Base: All Respondents
 rao Deshmukh and J&K Cricket Association head Farooq Abdullah. And all of them vehemently opposed the Bill, arguing ostensibly that it is only private bodies (such as the BCCI) who are able to contribute and grow a sport without too much interference from the government. It's a suspect argument at best. The need for transparency and accountability in sports bodies is absolutely important as are some of the other provisions of the Bill including that



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athletes and sportspersons get 25 per cent voting rights in the decision-making bodies. Sports Minister Ajay Maken has since pointed out that scams such as the Commonwealth Games scam may not have happened had such a

Should BCCI be brought under RTI?

	Valid Percent
Can't Say	13.5
Yes	74.5
No	12
Total	100

Base: All Respondents

bill been in place. However, his angry cabinet colleagues (Sharad Pawar should perhaps take a leaf out of Cricket Australia's book, where accounts are voluntarily made public) want to stick on to their feudal and questionable grip on sports in India even as there is little account of how public money is being spent by them. What do the people of the country feel about the sports bill as proposed by Ajay Maken and it being shot down by the cabinet? A recent CVOTER survey polled 1183 randomly selected people across 28 states in India for their opinion. India's policy makers should listen to this:

Do you think politicians will ever let go of their control on Indian sports?

	Valid Percent
Can't Say	9.7
Yes	32.6
No	57.7
Total	100

Base: All Respondents

When asked whether they supported the Sports Development Bill as proposed by the sports minister, a majority of more than 60 per cent of the respondents replied in the affirmative. Clearly ground support for the provisions of this bill is very strong.

A majority of about 43 per cent of the people are still hopeful that this kind of Bill will eventually be passed by the Manmohan Singh cabinet. However, a substantial number of people 29.8 per cent feel that the Cabinet with its vested interests will never pass such a Bill thus signaling a lack of confidence in the integrity and intent of the government.

An overwhelming majority of almost three quarter of people polled is also staunchly in support of the provision that the BCCI should be brought under the purview of the RTI making its functioning open to public scrutiny. The cricket mandarins of the country may be uncomfortable with a loss of their absolute power but the mandate of the people, the ultimate deciding authority in a democracy, is firmly behind such a move.



About 57.7 per cent of people say that it is unlikely that politicians will ever relinquish their hold on Indian sports. Thus to have sports sans politicians in India seems very unlikely at the moment even though such a clean up may be urgently needed. More than half the number of people polled i.e. more than 54 per cent also believe (and rightly, if newspaper reports are to be believed) that there is great pressure from those in the Cabinet who head sports bodies to change or reject the Bill. The Cabinet had rejected it and asked for changes in the provisions before the Bill is brought to it again. Indian sports is in need of a clean-up. It is a pity that those in power are so against that.

On 30th August, Cabinet had rejected the bill and asked the Ministry to rework on it. Do you think this is due to the pressure of those Ministers who are themselves a part of sports federations?

	Valid Percent
Can't Say	15.9
Yes	54.7
No	29.4
Total	100

Base: All Respondents



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Mamata on a strong wicket.....

A recent CVOTER survey finds almost three quarter of people in Paschimbanga say Didi's rule is better than the Left's

When the Mamata Express came chugging into Kolkata earlier this year, it was with a firm mandate for change. The people of West Bengal had voted out the Left in a historic turn of affairs and voted in the feisty 'didi' of Indian politics who has firm grassroots support and an image of being a people's leader. More than Mamata Banerjee herself, the vote was for change. Decades of Left rule in Bengal had left it with

what we are otherwise used to in India. On her very first day in office Mamata chaired a cabinet meeting which went on till midnight almost as if to prove her commitment to fulfilling the 200-day agenda outlined in the Trinamool Congress election manifesto even while facing



a crippling work culture, few job opportunities and an image problem. With the new rule, the people perhaps hoped that these important issues would be addressed and the state enjoy the fruits of economic development that others such as Gujarat are doing.

The Mamata government completed its 100 days in office in August end and the report card is pretty decent. The new chief minister seems to be in a hurry to work and sort out many of the issues plaguing her state. Indeed, her pace of work seems to be a welcome change from

After the completion of 100 days, do you think the new govt is better than the previous Left Front govt. ?

	Valid Percent
Don't know/ Cant'say	7.5
Yes	74.1
No	18.4
Total	100

Base: All Respondents

uphill tasks in solving issues like the Maoist problem and tackling financial crisis.

The financial crisis, inherited by the TC government, has Bengal's total outstanding liability at more than Rs two lakh crore in the fiscal year that ended in March 2011. The Centre's Rs 21,614 crore financial package to help

Methodology:

Sample of 1262 randomly selected respondents by CATI in West Bengal during 16th to 19th August 2011.

the debt-laden state back on track has, however, failed to satisfy Banerjee. "Though we are not satisfied, we understand that the Centre has some compulsions," she said recently. The CM had said the actual grant amounts to Rs 9,240 crore and will be used for development. The state has to raise the balance Rs 12,374 crore from the market and the Centre has enhanced the state's borrowing limit as part of the package.



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The most popular initiative by the new government is the decision to return 400 acres of land to the farmers of Singur acquired from them for the Nano car factory of the Tata motors and now lying abandoned. The state government passed a bill in the Assembly to return a portion

Do you think that this govt will be able to solve the major problems of the state?

	Valid Percent
Don't know / Can't say	14
Yes	68.9
No	17
Total	100

Base: All Respondents

of the land acquired by previous Left Front government from the unwilling farmers for the factory. However, Tata Motors has challenged the Singur Land Rehabilitation and Development Act, 2011 and the case is being heard by Calcutta High Court. But to keep her party's promise



on acquisition of land, the Mamata government has set up an expert committee which has recommended that private companies would have to buy land directly from land owners and the government would have no role to play in it.

The state government also took a big step towards restor-

ing peace in Darjeeling Hills in less than two months of coming to power by finalising a pact with Gorkha Janamukti Morcha for creation of a new hill council with wider powers. With GJM demanding inclusion of areas of Dooars and Terai of Jalpaiguri district in the proposed hill council, a committee has been formed by the government to go into the issue which is facing strong opposition from the Left parties and Adivasi Vikash Parishad, a tribal body.

Mamata Banerjee has also been trying to sort out the Maoist problem in the state. She announced her decision to release 52 political prisoners, including two Maoist leaders and extended an olive branch to Maoists of tribal

What is your opinion about the Hill agreement which have been signed by the state officials and the GJM leader Roshon Giri?

	Valid Percent
Don't know / Can't say	21.3
Very good	12.1
Good	51
Bad	15.5
Total	100

Base: All Respondents

Jangalmahal by promising a special package to those who join the mainstream.

While the 100-day report card also reads measures such as the name change of the state to Paschimbanga (Several alternatives such as Bangabhumi, Banga, Bangla, Banga Pradesh were also discussed but only Paschimbanga earned political consensus), more solid announcements pertain to creating a million job opportunities over the next two years and doing away with "bandh" culture in the state. Whether the new CM will succeed in these remains to be seen. But equally important is the public perception of her work.

A recent CVOTER survey in the state tried to assess that and the responses should bring even more cheer to the Mamata Banerjee-led government. When asked whether the new government was better than the previous Left-led one, almost three quarter (74 per cent) of the people



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polled replied in a resounding “yes”. Equally impressively, more than 68 per cent felt that the new government would be able to solve some of the most pressing issues facing the state. That is a big vote of confidence in her work for the new CM.

More than half the people polled also say that the hill

Are you happy with the peace and development initiative taken by the chief minister Mamata Banerjee in Jangal Mohol area?

	Valid Percent
Don't know / Can't say	4
Yes	84.1
No	12
Total	100

Base: All Respondents

agreement signed by Banerjee is good. A further 12 per cent in fact call it “very good”, while just 15 per cent call

What are the main challenges to the Mamata Banerjee's Govt?

	Valid Percent
Don't know/ Can't say	9.8
Unemployment	27.3
Poverty eradication	13.5
Corruption	11.1
Industrialization	8.3
Arms recovery and restoration of peace in the state	29.9
Total	100

Base: All Respondents

it “bad”. This is a significant achievement. But even more importantly, more than 84 per cent of the people polled said they were happy with the new development initiatives taken in the state. On the other hand, recovery of

arms and restoring peace in the state as well as fending off unemployment are seen as the biggest issues confronting the government.

Where the new government seems to have faltered though is ironically in symbolism. A majority of 30 per



cent of the people still prefer the old name of West Bengal for their state instead of the new one! But that is minor trouble for a government on a strong wicket.

What is your suggestion regarding the proposal for the change of the state's name?

	Valid Percent
Don't know / Can't say	8.5
BANGA	42
BONGODESH	7.8
BONGO PRADESH	4.4
BONGO	6.9
WEST BENGAL	30.4
Total	100

Base: All Respondents

