

# *Apni Baat* with Shri Pradeep Jain 'Aditya'



## A BRIEF PROFILE

- 2004-2009: Member, Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha (two times).
- 2009: Elected to 15th Lok Sabha from Jhansi-Lalitpur parliamentary constituency.
- Currently Union Minister of State for Rural Development.

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*It proved to be another milestone in the short yet eventful journey of ApnaBundelkhand.com when Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Rural Development, Shri Pradeep Jain 'Aditya' visited its office on June 24, 2010. The following is the text of the short interview he gave on the various issues pertaining to the Bundelkhand region to Deputy Editor Anubhava Srivastava.*

**AS: It is our privilege to have you here and on behalf of ApnaBundelkhand.com team, I extend a very warm welcome to you Sir.**

PJ: Thank you Srivastava Ji.

**AS: You are the first and the youngest minister in the central government since independence who belongs to the Bundelkhand region. How do you feel at being assigned this huge responsibility?**

PJ: It is indeed a very challenging assignment. Our leader Shri Rahul Gandhi Ji has shown tremendous faith in me in assigning me this important responsibility. My role assumes even more importance as Bundelkhand is a backward region and I am a Minister of State in the Rural Development Ministry, a department directly linked to the livelihood of the rural populace. Hence people of Bundelkhand in general and of the rural areas in particular have lots of expectations.

**AS: What do you feel are the main challenges in your present assignment?**

PJ: In the Rural Development Ministry, the main challenge before me is the effective implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS). This flagship scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development has the ability to completely transform the rural landscape of India. However there are complaints of large-scale corruption and inefficiency in the scheme which need to be tackled effectively by the state governments. This is the biggest challenge for all of us and the government is sincerely working to address all such issues.

**AS: How do you plan to tackle this issue?**

PJ: There is a need to increase the awareness level among the rural people about the scheme and its various provisions. MNREGS is not just any other government scheme but an act of parliament and implementation has to be done by the state governments. People have to realise that demanding and getting work for 100 days every year is their legal right. There is also an increasing need of civil society participation to ensure effective monitoring and implementation of the scheme. I feel that organisations like the RTI Foundation have a great role to play here as Right to Information Act is the biggest tool in the hands of the ordinary citizens to bring about transparency and accountability in the system.

**AS: Besides corruption and inefficiency in MNREGS, what do you think are the other problem areas as far as Bundelkhand is concerned?**

PJ: The other big issues that need to be urgently addressed are illiteracy, drought, poverty and large scale migration from Bundelkhand. All this is happening because of the lack of development. Rahul Ji has made several visits to the region and was deeply concerned about the present scenario. Accordingly, Samra committee was appointed to look into the agrarian issues related to the Bundelkhand region and on the basis of its recommendations, the Bundelkhand package of Rs 7266 crores has been implemented by the central government through the Planning Commission of India. Even the National Advisory Committee (NAC) has taken a note of the situation there. We are making a detailed plan of action on how to address the present situation.

**AS: How do you feel the Bundelkhandi community, settled outside the region, can contribute to its growth?**

PJ: Their contribution will be vital if the region has to emerge out of the current situation. In the spirit of Bundelkhand symbolized by “*Shaurya, Tapasya, Tyaag, Balidan*”, they must come forward to give not only their suggestions and views on how and what to do for the region but also contribute via investment in the region in order to increase employment opportunities and foster development. We need to create a model of Public Private Partnership (PPP) for the holistic and all-round development of the Bundelkhand region.

**AS: Lastly, we would like to have your views on the efforts being made by ApnaBundelkhand.com.**

PJ: This is an excellent initiative and I congratulate all the team members of ApnaBundelkhand.com. The relevant and useful information provided on the website will contribute to a great extent in increasing awareness about Bundelkhand and its various issues, not only among the common people of region but also among the policy-makers in the highest echelons of government. I appeal to all to use this platform and come forward to contribute for the development of Bundelkhand region, leaving aside all biases of region, caste, religion and social hierarchy. I wish ApnaBundelkhand.com team all success in its future endeavours.