Twitter Thread by Tushar



Tushar
@tushjain15

People think Modi needs Punjab to win. He won without Punjab, not once, but twice, and what happens in the state does not impact his political prospects at all. Heck, he'd be long gone when Punjab runs out of ground water 15-20 years from now. Yet, he's taking the right call.

I was on the ground in Punjab in 2019, and what most Sikhs I interacted with told me was they would want BJP to play a greater role in the politics of the state. They narrated how they were sick of the Akalis, of the stagnant regime of the Captain, and they trusted Modi.

I was in Anandpur Sahib, the constituency that was won by @ManishTewari later. I interacted with a few folks, running shops of religious artefacts around the Anandpur Sahib, and most of them wanted more industry in the region. More industry, more jobs, more prosperity.

Yes, there are blessed families in terms of agriculture in the state but there are two extremes. The ones who are blessed, and the ones who are not. For the ones who aren't, there is a need for more infrastructure, more industry, more investments. The state has potential.

The new farm laws would have created a generation of agripreneurs, created the potential for cold-storage, formalised functioning of small farms, contract farming, and what not. The fertile lands of the state offered unlimited potential merely from an agricultural point of view.

In turn, that would have a positive impact on other areas too. A better regime than that of the Akalis between 2007 and 2017 would have encouraged more investments. To give you an example, let's talk about the IT sector in Punjab's city Mohali, bordering Chandigarh.

Chandigarh's IT Park, an SEZ, failed. Barring Infosys' huge campus, it has only smaller companies, and the rents are crazy high, so most companies end up relocating. Mohali's IT Park, stretching 12-15 kilometres from the Chandigarh airport, for 5 years, has seen weak investment.

You have ISB in that area, a railway station, connectivity to national highways, colleges, malls, and everything one can ask for around an IT park. But unlike Gurugram's MG Road, this project has failed to take off. It's been 5 years and the area's growth is stagnant.

This is only one example. Industries across the state are leaving, thanks to ten pathetic years under the Akalis. Full of corruption and what not. The farm laws could have changed that, but alas! Today is a sad end to what could have been a great start from Punjab's lost decade.

I worked in this IT Park from 2015 to 2017 and barring a few empty shells, nothing new has come up. Roads are in a poor state unless built by the Centre. In Zirakpur, bordering Chandigarh, which saw a real estate boom in last 20 years, you have no electricity for 10-15 hours/day.

The state is degrading at a pace unthinkable. Yesterday, in a discussion with a leading economist from the state (interview soon on @SwarajyaMag), he elaborated on how the state needs the farm laws more than Modi needing the state. Yet, we see all this backlash. Terrible!

Amritsar, outside the heritage city that was built by the Akalis before the 2017 election as a way to garner votes and apologise for their terrible governance continues to lie in shambles. Akalis, and now the Congress, has ruined the state. BJP was the hope.

So, where are the protesters coming from?

As voiced in countless media reports, most farmers are trapped in a debt-cycle with middlemen, and these middlemen could not stand competition from the private sector, and therefore, they roughed up all the poor farmers, and thus, this.

These middlemen command good local political patronage, and support, and therefore, are indispensable to the government and parties in the state. Modi tried breaking that monopoly, one that goes back more than four decades. and he did it for the people of Punjab.

So, to conclude, the BJP has nothing to lose, barring, of course, the criticism it deserves for happened at ITO and other areas today, but they'll bounce back as farmers in other state embrace the laws. Punjab's downward trajectory will continue. n/n