

The second sowing

June 6, 2009, Issue 22 Volume 6

Comment | Print & Email



KOTA NEELIMA

It could be a sign of something critical **LISTEN TO YOUR BODY** [GET A HEALTH CHECK-UP DONE](#) Protect yourself financially against any uncertainty **A public interest initiative by KOTAK PRUDENTIAL**

Continuous shoulder pain could be a sign of something critical like a heart disease **LISTEN TO YOUR BODY** [GET A HEALTH CHECK-UP DONE](#) Protect yourself financially against any uncertainty

Farmer suicides, loan waivers, a wheat import scam. Kota Neelima analyses Sharad Pawar's rocky first term as agriculture minister, and the road ahead

ONE MAN stands surrounded by the debris of agricultural distress in this country: **Sharad Pawar**. In his second term as Agriculture Minister, he faces the formidable task of redeeming himself by solving the farm crisis that has claimed so many lives in India's heartland.



Reaping a new? NCP President Sharad Pawar (left) with Congress bigwigs at the swearing-in
Photo: AP

The top leadership of the Congress is said to have pondered hard on the pros and cons of this allocation. The list of negatives was long. For starters, Pawar appeared to contemplate farmer suicides even in his home state from a distance, having only occasionally visited the killing fields. He seemed too preoccupied with cricket responsibilities. Further, there was a developing case of a conflict of interest with Pawar handling agriculture and civil supplies. His earlier position on futures trading in commodities did not help.

With such a startling record as agriculture minister, how did **Sharad Pawar** get the portfolio again? Because there is, after all, a list of positives. One, the **NCP** is less troublesome than other allies like the DMK, and less whimsical than Mamata. Pawar declared quite early in the game that he supported the Congress unconditionally and was not hankering after a ministerial post. Two, assembly elections are around the corner in Maharashtra, which the Congress and the **NCP** will most likely contest together. It is to be expected that in a spirit of "give and take," **Sharad Pawar** might agree to a Congress chief minister again, if the coalition wins in the polls. He also believes in negotiations and settling on a plan agreeable to the Congress leadership, as was seen in the case of minimum support prices or the farm loan waiver, which could easily have bypassed poor farmers had it not been changed.

Pawar was third in the line-up of cabinet ministers sworn in last week, a signal, many believe, of promotion.

Eminent agricultural scientist and policy-maker **Dr MS Swaminathan** says, "After C Subramaniam and Jagjivan Ram, this is the first time that a political heavyweight is holding the agriculture portfolio. He is a senior man with vast experience. He revolutionised agriculture in Maharashtra, especially horticulture."

About the second term, he says, "Both the farmers' commission report and the national policy on farmers are tasks of great importance and will make agricultural development human-centric."



airtel **Airtel Broadband @ Rs.899** [▶](#)

YOU MAY ALSO LIKE



VHP organized a 'Tiranga Yatra' in Agra and Ferozabad in UP
News | 01:49

Powered by