

**NOW, THE AK-203
NEW WEAPON, NEW STRATEGY**

**SO MANY COMMISSIONS!
BUT POST TRAGEDY, NO ACCOUNTABILITY**

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NOVEMBER 9, 2025

THE WEEK

BIHAR ELECTIONS

THE CHALLENGER

RJD LEADER
TEJASHWI YADAV

People are fed up, angry.
They want change.

THE DEFENDER

DEPUTY CM
SAMRAT CHOUDHARY

Nitish was, is and will
remain chief minister.

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Cleaning the cabinet

With ministers courting controversy, Fadnavis gets ready for a tough review of his team

BY DNYANESH JATHAR

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis seems determined to play the role of a strict headmaster. As his government approaches the one-year anniversary of its formation on September 5, 2025—he has announced a performance audit of his ministers.

Speaking to journalists during a Diwali interaction, Fadnavis emphasised the need for such an audit. BJP leaders indicated that the party's top leadership felt the government's image was suffering because of the actions and statements of certain ministers.

A senior BJP leader said the government's performance has been "mixed". According to him, some ministers are doing well while others have fallen short, both within the BJP and its allies—the Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party, led by Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, respectively. When asked about controversial ministers like the NCP's Dhananjay Munde and Sanjay Shirsat, and the Shiv Sena's Yogesh Kadam, the leader said the party should have thought about it when it decided to form the

coalition. "Didn't we know what we are entering into when we made the alliances?" he asked. If he intends to act against errant ministers from other parties, Fadnavis would have the difficult task of convincing Shinde and Pawar.

Fadnavis has ruled out a Gujarat-style reshuffle, where the entire cabinet—with the exception of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel—resigned to make way for a new team, which included young leaders such as the 34-year-old Rivaba Jadeja. But in Gujarat, the government had completed three years; in Maharashtra, it is yet to complete a year, so such a reshuffle is unlikely to happen.

Nonetheless, the ministers will be audited. "If Devendra ji wants to carry out a performance audit, it is a welcome step; it is, in fact, a necessary exercise," said BJP spokesperson Sujay Patki. If there are cases of the government's image getting tarnished because of certain ministers courting controversies, they will have to be dealt with firmly.

Among those who have courted controversy are Shirsat and Kadam. Videos of Shirsat with a bag filled with cash went viral earlier this year,



though he claimed it contained waste paper. His son Siddhanth was also drawn scrutiny after Fadnavis ordered an inquiry into the sale of a hotel linked to him in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar district.

Kadam, the son of veteran Sena leader Ramdas Kadam, faces allegations of involvement in illegal sand mining. Opposition parties have also alleged that he runs a dance-cum-orchestra bar in Mumbai under his mother's name.

The government's image was dented the most when Dhananjay Munde was asked to resign from the cabinet after his close aide Walmik Karad was accused of killing Santosh Deshmukh, the sarpanch of Mas-sajog village in Beed district. A BJP activist, Deshmukh had also been a booth chief in the constituency of Pankaja Munde, minister and Dhananjay's cousin. It was a major setback for the government, forcing



AMEY MANSABDAR

remove Munde and overhaul the police hierarchy in the district, which had been under Dhananjay's influence.

BJP insiders also point to the ongoing fight between Shiv Sena leader Ravindra Dhangekar and BJP leader and Union Minister Murlidhar Mohol over the controversial redevelopment of Pune's Jain Boarding House. Dhangekar accused Mohol of being involved in the deal, which generated a lot of negative publicity for the BJP among the Jain community. Mohol has denied any role, and Shinde has cautioned Dhangekar against escalating the issue to a level where it would affect ties with the BJP.

But the damage has been done, forcing Fadnavis to intervene. "The Jain community has long supported the BJP, and the party will act in its best interest," said a BJP leader.

Interestingly, the BJP also be-

lieves there is a need to discipline some of its own ministers—like Ports and Fisheries Minister Nitesh Rane, son of former Maharashtra chief minister Narayan Rane. Known for his hardline hindutva statements, Rane's performance in office has been good, but his outspoken nature has caused discomfort. "Nitesh talks too much," said a BJP leader. "So Devendra ji will give him a stern message."

A source close to Fadnavis said the performance audit would apply to all ministers—those from the BJP and allies alike. "Like an exam, all students have to appear for it. It will happen after the government completes one year in office in December," said the source.

A BJP insider said the assessment would be made on the basis of several parameters, and that ministers may not be dropped from the cabinet immediately. Also, as another BJP

TEST OF TOUGHNESS

Fadnavis with NCP leader and Chief Minister Ajit Pawar. Fadnavis will have to convince allies like Pawar if he intends to act against errant ministers

leader noted, ministers from the Sena or the NCP cannot just be easily dropped, "since it is a coalition government". The audit, apparently, will be more on the lines of the stock-taking that was done after the government completed 100 days in office.

Two senior BJP leaders told THE WEEK that the government was "morally corrupt", and that the only face-saving aspect was that Fadnavis continues to have a clean image. "Why just blame our alliance partners—the BJP is only relatively better," said one of the leaders. "When you have Pawar and Chhagan Bhujbal as senior ministers, will a real performance audit ever happen?" ●