**Anna Hazare in a new avatar,surrounded by Kejriwal and Kiran,is a different Anna…He has become much more inflexible | The Indian Express**

Anna Hazare in a new avatar,surrounded by Kejriwal and Kiran,is a different Anna…He has become much more inflexible Summary. In this Walk the Talk on NDTV 24x7 with The Indian Express Editor-in-Chief Shekhar Gupta,Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan speaks about his plans for the state and his experience dealing with civil society. Related. In this Walk the Talk on NDTV 24×7 with The Indian Express Editor-in-Chief Shekhar Gupta,Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan speaks about his plans for the state and his experience dealing with civil society. Just walking around this place (Bandra Kurla Complex) tells you that doing things is possible. Just the other day,this was barren land but now its way better than Gurgaon in terms of facilities,quality of buildings,quality of life. So if you can do this,you can do more in Mumbai and Maharashtra. Were proud of this new business district that has come up on 300 hectares of land that was just barren land with some slums there. Weve built a beautiful world-class business district. All the top finance companiesSBI,ICICI,Citibank,NABARD,National Stock Exchangeare here. Were building a new business district at Wadala. The prices in Nariman Point have already stabilised. They are not shooting northwards because of alternative facilities coming up,very close to the airport. For a non-Mumbaiwalla,what is Wadala? Wadala is a land in the eastern suburb where we had planned a truck terminal but we realised its not ideal for a truck terminal,so a similar business district is being created there. As I told you,many long-pending projects have been fast-tracked. Now youve got your settling-down period,youve got your baptism by fire,youve checked out the pace and bounce of the pitch,the ball is a bit old…what are the five or six big-ticket things you want to do now? One is the Trans Harbour Link that will connect,through a 22 km sea bridge,the eastern part of south Mumbai harbour to mainland Navi Mumbai,where the new airport is coming up. Thats a $2 billion project (Rs 10,000 crore). This was stalled,but we restarted it. Six or seven top-class international consortia have bid and we hope to award the contract by November this year. The second one is an ambitious project for a coastal road. Youve seen the sea link. It is an expensive proposition. But if something like Marine Drive,where by reclaiming a little bit of land we can build a six- or eight-lane road,right along the coast and then create a promenade for people to walk about,to create a public space there… But what about the second part of the sea link,does it still continue? Thats still open. The second part of the sea link is still bid out,from Worli to Haji Ali. But I dont think the concessionaire is interested in going ahead with it. Theres some mediation going on and well be able to resolve it. Many people think its not the best way to build a bridgeto connect the same sides of a coastline. Normally,a bridge is built across the water body,but that was a decision taken earlier and we honour that decision. The third thing is in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Outside the island city of Mumbai and the suburban city of Mumbai,there is a lot of area. From Alibaug right up to Virar,were trying to build a 126-km multi-modal transportation hub,which will have a combination of metro,eight-lane highway,bus rapid transit corridor,non-motorised roads. This 126-km road will have seven growth centres around it. And of course,along with any road project that is that complex,cities will come up,there will be huge opportunities. This is a Rs 13,000-crore project. We have money. We have innovative public private partnerships. Its unusual for a chief minister to say we have the money. Now going deeper from Mumbai,I know what worries you most of all is irrigation because you link that to farm distress,migration to cities from villages,suicides. For a state as rich as this,your irrigation is shockingly poor. In a state like Maharashtra,which is perennially dependent on rainfall,only less than 17 per cent of the total land that is cropped is irrigated. So 83 per cent of the farmers are entirely dependent on rainfall. Where has all the money spent on irrigation in all these decades gone? We spend about Rs 8,000 crore every year on irrigation. The figures which have come out recently are not very flatteringthat for the last 10 years,there has been very little increase in irrigation potential. About Rs 60,000 crore has been spent over the last decade. A lot of money has gone into digging canals…sometimes the dam is not ready and sometimes the canal is not completely linked up because there are some land acquisition issues. Money gets spent but theres no water that is flowing. I believe that the latest figures show that youve only added 0.01 per cent area under irrigation. Well,thats what one of the economic survey reports say. But Ive asked the irrigation department to give the state a white paper so that (we know) the exact position of how much irrigation was added every year and how much money was spent. If theres anything wrong with the strategy,then we need to look at it again. We have to shift from big dams and long canals to water conservation structures. Its being done well in your neighbouring statesalong with the big dams. Yes,it is. Weve got about Rs 78,000 crore worth of big dam projects which are unfinished yet. Even if you dont take up any new project,it will take 10 years to complete the existing ones. So Ive ordered that no new project will be taken up until the old ones are finished. I think well need to look at the irrigation strategy afresh. Also,as a country,we cannot look at a Punjab farmer,a Haryana farmer,a UP farmer and then decide national policies. The dry-land farmer is a different kettle of fish altogether. When the rains fail,theres huge distress and thats what you see in Amravati division of Maharashtra,where the irrigation potential is hardly 9 per cent. Thats why you see a very high number of suicides in that area. Big dam projects are too slow a process. So were changing the strategy now,were going for water conservation structures,check dams,micro-irrigation so that water is utilised more scientifically. The Central government recently launched a Vidarbha irrigation package. Frankly,Mumbai gets focused upon a lot more but farmer suicides are the most embarrassing thing about Maharashtra. Its a fact,were not very proud about that. For example,let me tell you that many mitigation strategies have been worked out. This is the only state which gives crop loans of up to Rs 1 lakh at zero rate of interest to farmers and Rs 3 lakh at the rate of 1 per cent. But now,I am focusing on water charges and electricity charges being collected. So at least you will become less bankrupt than youve been. The electricity sector is under stress because we hugely subsidise the agricultural sector. Thats what is putting pressure on industry. So when you travel in these areas,what is the most touching thing a really poor Maharashtrian has told you? He tells me,Why cant I get drinking water on tap? He knows the piped water scheme is working in his neighbouring village or in some other place. If I have to fill a tanker in Sangli district,I have to go 65 km to find a source of water. What is the most distressed thing a rich man has told you in Mumbai? Well,the rich man has traffic woes in Mumbai,housing shortage,the rents and now,of course,there is an economic slowdown. But I think I see hope even among the rich people here that things can be improved with better governance. We are using e-governance,were remeasuring the whole state. The last measurement exercise was done in 1920. After that,for 100 years,nothing has happened. Weve now launched a project with the Central government where every single piece of land will be remeasured and computerised,online property cards will be given. The mutation exercise is being done,lok adalats are being set up. Theres a lot of activity in the rural sector and were reaching out to the people. Weve listed all your problems,but not one. You also run a state to which Anna Hazare and Medha Patkar belong. I have nothing against NGOs doing legitimate activity. The advantage (about NGOs) is that most of them are really dedicated people. They are dedicated to a cause and they want to set things right in the society. But at the same time,they get a very limited experience on a particular project. They dont have an overall view that a politician running a state would get,where a lot of compromises have to be made,a lot of balancing of interests needs to be done… …a lot of negotiations have to happen. Yes,you are required to negotiate with different stakeholders. NGOs are not required to do that. Theyve a one-point agenda: bring the Lokpal bill,thats it and nothing else. I personally dont think that Lokpal alone will solve the problem. I think an entire anti-corruption infrastructure architecture has to be put in place,with Lokpal as one component of that. The Central government is trying to do that. Whats been your experience dealing with Anna Hazare? Hes been very nice. I dealt with him earlier. He means well. Except sometimes he could be coercive in his own way. But I think hes been in the company of people who have got other priorities rather than just cleaning up the city. Such as what? For example,the decision in Hisar to politicise the campaign set back the campaign completely. I think Anna Hazare,whenever we have dealt with him in the state,has always believed in give and take. But not now. He has become much more inflexible,harder now. Maybe thats the influence of people over him. But when you dealt with him when he was fasting in Mumbai,you were trying to persuade him to break his fast. I personally didnt get involved,but we gave him the facilities he required. Were you worried that night? Well,of course,things could get out of hand. We gave him all the facilities he wanted within rules and I think he overplayed his cards. Now he is touring the state but not getting the response that he got. People are against corruption,not so much the enacting of a particular legislation. A Lokpal will be brought in,theres a draft in Parliament. I think itll be passed. Have you tried to reason with him in your conversations? I did,on the Lokpal. Once I met him in Ahmednagar when we were in a joint programme. I told him he shouldnt insist on the lower functionaries being in the Bill because the whole system would get clogged. He didnt believe that. His personal experience at the village level perhaps makes him think that a tehsildar or a village-level official must be punished. But the main idea is the top guy should be punished. What about Medha Patkar? You dealt with her too. She also means well. I think both of them have a one-track agenda. But finally,we have to deal with all stakeholders. When youre building a big dam,yes there are difficulties. You have to resettle people but you also need water for people who are starving,for people who are thirsty. So how do you fulfill their demands? Who is the more difficult to deal with? Who is more challenging to deal with? I have dealt with both of them,but the outcomes have been different. She is very passionate but can sometimes be impractical. You could always negotiate with Anna Hazare. The first RTI Act was done in Maharashtra even before Delhi took it up and he was responsible for at least six Cabinet ministers resigning on corruption. So he has a track record. But who has taxed your patience more? Anna Hazare in a new avatar,surrounded by (Arvind) Kejriwal and Kiran (Bedi),is a different Anna Hazare than the one we knew earlier. I had a meeting with him last month before he launched his Maharashtra yatra. I told him we already have a Lokayukta law but well wait for the outcome of the Central legislation on Lokayukta or till we get a model Act. But if they dont do either,then well look at our own law. But I dont want to be in a competition that Uttarakhand did this,Karnataka did this. Uttarakhand did it,but did not survive to tell the tale. At least that Act didnt get them re-elected. Thats true. The point is,we need a strong legislation. Ultimately,we must quickly decide all these matters. We must not let them linger on. Do you miss Delhi? Well,Delhi has its own charm. Ive been in the Union government,the canvas is much bigger. The challenge here is we can be more decisive. Whatever we do here gets reflected immediately in the decision tomorrow. You saw what happened with FDI in retail and with NCTC. Any decision you take,youve to get everybody on board. Here,its only the two of us. The Centre has to take everyone on board,including Mamata Banerjee and Narendra Modi. Yes. Like GST,for that matter. Its a political stand being taken by the BJP thats hurting the country a great deal. In the city of Mumbai,Maharashtra,we want a regime (GST) like that. Are you falling in love with your job in Mumbai or do you sometimes feel like running away? The work pressure is such that you have got to meet people,travel the state. A lot of time is spent in debating policies about which people are not happy. They want quick decisions on applications. I am accused of holding meetings but there are vexatious issues…Take the MIHAN (Multi-modal International Cargo Hub and Airport) project in Nagpur. It has been hanging since 2000. Now weve fast-tracked the project and weve got TCS,Infosys to come there. So will Nagpur become a counter magnet? Nagpur will become one,so will Aurangabad. The Delhi-Mumbai industrial corridor will pass through that area. And were developing two National Investment and Manufacturing Zonesone in Aurangabad and one in the eastern part around Nagpur. They will become the new growth centres for industry. I can see your face lights up when you talk of your work here,youre not missing Delhi very much. But if you feel like coming,I know there will always be a place for you.