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THE QUARTERLY BITSIAN: PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN, MINISTER OF STATE (PMO), GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

He has a EEE degree from BITS and a Master's from U C Berkeley and is one of the youngest members of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's office. Mr. Chavan has been an active participant in BITS Alumni Association's Delhi Chapter activities and is an active proponent of technology based economic growth in India.

PRITHVIRAJ Chavan is one the youngest and most important ministers in the current Manmohan Singh government at the Centre. At 8pm on Monday he has just returned after installing the Congress government in Maharashtra, on Tuesday he's on a flight to Abu Dhabi along with the President of India to pay homage to the erstwhile UAE President, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, he sure is a busy man.



He was tipped to be the next Chief Minister of the richest state in India but left the decision to his party chief, Sonia Gandhi. Instead he was chosen to help run the United Progressive Alliance government at the centre.

As a Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Mr. Chavan's task is to ensure smooth functioning of the UPA coalition government by ensuring that the entire cabinet

is focused on the common minimum program and all the ministers speak a common language in front of the media. Apart from that is also part of the standing committee on finance.

Mr. Chavan graduated from BITS with an EEE in 1967 and headed to UC Berkeley for an MS degree. At that time Berkeley was the hotbed of student politics in the US. For Prithviraj Chavan politics was what he grew up in Karad, Maharashtra.

Mr. Chavan's father Dajisaheb Chavan became an MP after winning the election from Karad, as a Peasants and Workers Party candidate in 1962. His next three terms as MP were as a Congress nominee. Succeeding him in 1977 until 1991 was Mr. Chavan's mother, Premilatai Chavan.

It was in early 90's when Prithviraj Chavan bumped into Rajiv Gandhi. "We have many technocrats in the country", said Rajiv Gandhi, "but we don't have many who can get elected and join politics. You have that potential!" That is when Mr. Chavan decided to join politics and was elected to the India parliament in 1996. He was re-elected as an MP in

1998. Mr. Chavan is currently a member of the Rajya Sabha. During his decade-long career as a parliamentarian he has also served as the Congress parliamentary party's deputy whip, party general secretary and party spokesperson.

In 1999 when Sharad Pawar left Congress to form his own party due to differences with Sonia Gandhi, Mr. Chavan chose to stay with Congress. His loyalty and closeness to the Gandhi family paid off this year when he was appointed the Minister of State in the PMO making him one of the youngest ministers in the Indian government.

He's a big proponent of investments in technology for the advancement of the country. He has voiced strongly his views on de-licensing of the 2.4 GHz band for Bluetooth technology and formulation of guidelines on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in primary education.

He is different from the perception of the average politician by way of his humility and soft-spoken nature. Mr Chavan is known for his soft smile and a firm handshake that make him an instant hit with the electorate. ♦

