AAP RULES THE CIVIC BODY FOR THE FIRST TIME

Mohali MLA's son Sarabjit Samana elected Mayor

R P Sharma chosen as Senior Deputy Mayor, Harpal Channa as Deputy Mayor, Congress boycotts voting due to absence of women in top leadership of civic body

Jasbir Malhi
Mohali, June 9

THE AAM Aadmi Party (AAP) secured all three key posts of the Mohali Municipal Corporation (MC) on Tuesday, days after the party took control of the civic body for the first time.

During the first meeting of the newly elected House, AAP councillor Sarabjit Singh Samana, who is son of Mohali MLA Kulwant Singh, was elected Mayor, while R P Sharma and Harpal Singh Channa were chosen as Senior Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor, respectively.

The most striking aspect of the election was that despite having only 27 elected councillors in the 50-member House, AAP candidates received 35 votes in all three contests. According to information available, support from one Congress councillor, two BJP councillors and four Independent councillors, along with the vote of MLA Kulwant Singh, helped AAP secure the impressive tally, triggering discussions over cross-voting and shifting political loyalties within the House.

Earlier, all 50 newly elected councillors took the oath of office before the election process for the top civic posts commenced. The proceedings were supervised by the Divisional Commissioner, Rupnagar, Manvesh Sidhu. Punjab AAP president and Cabinet minister Aman Arora was present at the meeting as the party's observer.

The Congress boycotted the mayoral election. The party's councillor Narpinder Singh Rangi said that the Congress refrained from voting because the AAP did not provide representation to any woman in the three key positions despite the women winning more than half the number of seats.

Rangi also expressed concern over the MLA and Mayor positions being held within the same family. "If the objective is public service, it can be effectively carried out through the MLA's office as well. The Mayor's post could have been entrusted to another senior party leader," he added. The councillor said that the Congress decided to boycott the proceedings as a mark of protest against these decisions.

Congress leaders said they would continue to raise public issues both inside and outside the House and play the role of a constructive opposition.

All the three AAP leaders received 35 votes each to be elected as Mayor, Senior Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Following the announcement of the results, celebrations broke out at the Municipal Corporation office. Arora formally seated Samana on the Mayor's chair, while MLA Kulwant Singh felicitated Sharma and Channa after their victories.

Arora said the councillors had reposed immense faith in Samana and assured that the Punjab government would extend full support to the Municipal Corporation for the city's development.

After being elected Mayor, Samana said, "Cleanliness remains Mohali's biggest challenge. Improving sanitation and clearing garbage accumulation across the city will be my top priority. Under the guidance of MLA Kulwant Singh, we will address civic issues one by one and fulfil the promises made to residents."

MLA Kulwant Singh said Mohali has got a dedicated and capable Mayor. He added that strengthening sanitation services, resolving water supply and sewerage issues, improving roads and civic infrastructure, and ensuring balanced development across all wards would remain the administration's key priorities.

Reflecting on his humble beginnings, newly elected Senior Deputy Mayor Sharma said that he once earned his livelihood repairing punctures.

"This city has given me everything. I thank the party leadership and MLA Kulwant Singh for giving an ordinary worker such a significant responsibility," Sharma added.

Deputy Mayor Channa called Samana a "visionary leader", adding that "Together, we will take Mohali's development to new heights".

After the elections, AAP workers took the three newly elected office-bearers in an open jeep procession and later visited Gurdwara Amb Sahib to offer prayers and seek blessings before beginning their new tenure.

Mayor's chair returns to the family

In 2015, Samana's father Kulwant Singh, who was then an Akali rebel, became the first Mayor of the Mohali Municipal Corporation. Eleven years later, the mayoral chair has returned to the family.

Following the announcement of the results, family members celebrated the occasion with visible emotion. His parents embraced him, fed him sweets and blessed him.

Samana appeared overwhelmed and emotional as he was formally seated in the Mayor's chair.

Women family members and supporters celebrated the occasion with traditional giddha performances, while the joy on the faces of his father MLA Kulwant Singh, wife, children and relatives reflected the significance of the moment.

27 women councillors, yet no woman gets a top civic post

Despite women holding a majority in the newly elected House, none was chosen for the three top positions in the civic body, triggering criticism from the Opposition leaders.

Of the 50 councillors elected to the Mohali Municipal Corporation, 27 are women, yet the posts of Mayor, Senior Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor have all gone to men.

Congress councillor and Punjab Mahila Congress president Baljit Kaur expressed disappointment over the decision. She said it was surprising that not even one of the three key posts was given to a woman despite women constituting more than half of the House.



(Clockwise from top) Mayor Sarabjit Singh Samana along with his deputies; Senior Deputy Mayor R P Sharma; and Deputy Mayor Harpal Singh Channa; after getting elected in a meeting at Corporation Bhawan in Mohali on Tuesday. JASBIR MALHI

• Know your Mohali civic body leadership

SARABJEET SINGH SAMANA
(Mayor)
Experience: Three-time councillor
Educational qualifications: Certificate in Planning and Business Entrepreneurship
Net worth: **Rs 15.06 crore**

R P SHARMA
(Senior Deputy Mayor)
Experience: Four-time councillor
Educational qualifications: Class 10 graduate
Net worth: **Rs 1.06 crore**

HARPAL CHANNA
(Deputy Mayor)
Experience: Three-time councillor
Educational qualifications: Class 12 graduate
Net worth: **Rs 1.53 cr**

Bus service for city, reducing traffic congestion: Samana lists out priorities

Mayor Sarabjit Samana after getting elected told *The Indian Express* that restoring and strengthening civic infrastructure would be his immediate focus, with several key projects set to be taken up on priority.

Samana said one of his foremost priorities would be the launch of the long-pending city bus service to reduce traffic congestion and provide residents with an affordable public transport option.

He also identified improving sanitation and waste management as a major concern. To address the issue, the Municipal Corporation plans to begin waste segregation activities at its land in Samgauli near Dera Bassi, besides constructing a boundary wall around the site and developing the required infrastructure.

Another key focus area, he said, would be the takeover of newly developed GMADA sectors. The Mayor said the Municipal Corporation would prepare a time-bound roadmap in coordination with GMADA to resolve pending financial and administrative issues and expedite the handover process after examining all aspects of the proposal.

Samana further said the civic body would prioritise the repair of the city's deteriorating road network and undertake a comprehensive exercise to improve road infrastructure across Mohali.

"Launching the city bus service, improving sanitation, streamlining waste management, expediting the takeover of GMADA sectors, repairing damaged roads and addressing traffic congestion on Airport Road will be among our top priorities. We will move quickly from planning to execution on these issues," Samana said. ENS

UT simplifies Mandi licensing process; security deposits abolished, licence validity extended up to 10 years

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Chandigarh, June 9

IN A major reform aimed at improving ease of doing business and promoting agricultural trade, UT Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria has approved the abolition of the requirement for furnishing Bank Guarantee and Cash Security by applicants seeking licences under Section 10 of the Punjab Agricultural Produce Market Act, 1961.

Following the approval, the State Agricultural Marketing Board, UT Chandigarh, has amended Rules 17 and 21 of the Punjab Agricultural Produce Market Rules, 1962, on the pattern of the Punjab Mandi Board.

Under the amended provisions, applicants will no longer be required to submit Bank Guarantees or Cash Security at the time of grant of licence, a move expected to reduce the financial burden on traders and simplify the licensing process.

The amendments also extend the validity of licences issued under Section 10 of the Act from three years to ten years, reducing procedural requirements and enhancing convenience for both existing licensees and new applicants.