

## **Canada: Record 4 Indian-origin ministers in PM Justin Trudeau's Cabinet**

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**Ottawa:** In a red-letter day for Indo-Canadians, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has inducted a record four members from the community in his diverse Cabinet that for the first time in the country's history is equally balanced between women and men.

Three Indian-origin men and one woman are part of the new cabinet that has 15 women and 15 men ministers. The team marks both a generational change and reflect Canada's diversity.

A record 19 Indian-Canadians were elected to parliament in elections last month. Herb Dhaliwal, the first Indian-Canadian minister in the country's history when Jean Chretien appointed him revenue minister in 1997, praised the diverse cabinet that includes a record four Indo-Canadian ministers.

"I am very happy...The cabinet is more reflective of Canadian society and I think it's remarkable the people we have and the strong representation we have," Dhaliwal was quoted as saying by the Vancouver Sun.

Harjit Sajjan, a decorated Sikh Lt Colonel in the Canadian Armed Forces who was elected as a MP for Vancouver South, has been named Canada's new Defence Minister.

Sajjan, who is in his mid-forties, served in Bosnia and had three deployments to Afghanistan, has received numerous military honours, including the Meritorious Service Medal in 2013, for reducing Taliban's influence in Kandahar Province.

Bardish Chagger, whose parents immigrated to Waterloo in Canada from India in the 1970s, is the new Minister of Small Business and Tourism.

"I'm really looking forward to this new mission that I'm on," said 35-year-old Chagger, who was born and raised in Waterloo.

"We're going to be able to work toward a better Canada. And I'm really excited to be working for Waterloo Region, as well, and I believe we'll have a strong voice moving forward."

51-year-old Amarjeet Sohi, who was born in India and immigrated to Edmonton in 1981, is the new Minister of Infrastructure and Communities.

Sohi, who had also worked as a bus driver, was arrested in India under accusations of terrorism in 1988. He was freed in 1990 and returned to Canada.

"I feel really humbled and honoured," said Sohi, who defeated former Conservative cabinet minister Tim Uppal in Edmonton-Mill Woods by just 95 votes.

Navdeep Bains, 38-year-old Indian-origin Canadian Sikh MP who played a key role in Trudeau's leadership bid in 2013, has been appointed as the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development.

As an MP for Mississauga-Brampton South from 2004 to 2011, Bains also served as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister in 2005.

Former health minister Indian-origin Ujjal Dosanjh said that he was also impressed by the diversity of the new cabinet and record number of Indo-Canadians appointed.

"That's a first. There's never been a presence in cabinet that strong. Even in B.C. (British Columbia), there were three at one time, not four," Dosanjh said.

"I think it is impressive from that point of view and it's also impressive from the other diversity point of view - you have 50 per cent women in very important portfolios and you have a former Afghan refugee," he added.

Trudeau, who won the October 19 general elections and ended the nearly 10-year rule of Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper, has selected his team based on several key factors which include ethnic diversity, regional distribution and a balance of new and veteran MPs.

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