

# Editorial

Wednesday, May 15, 2019

## The politics of rumours

Rumours about reshuffle of the N. Biren Singh led coalition government is going around in the state. Some says it may happen after the declaration of the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election result. Some says there are differences among the high profile BJP leaders of the state who are holding Ministerial post. Some are of the opinion that there may emerge a dissident from a group of BJP MLAs as ministerial berth are being enjoyed by the non BJP coalition partners. One very disturbing rumour is about an unseen race by two top profile BJP leaders for the post of Chief Minister. Well everything is possible in politics. But kitchen talk should not be considered serious. Saying so, reshuffle of Minister happened in the running of government and there is nothing to worry about it. However, if the small talk about the race for Chief Minister appeared true than the state will definitely be in crisis and for that reason the talk about the attempt by some top profile BJP leaders lobbying to topple the present Chief Minister is not supported by any logic.

A news report about some BJP Ministers and MLA camping at Kolkata drew the attention of many people. But the fact is that the visit to Kolkata by some BJP MLAs and Minister has nothing to do with the plan to make a major reshuffle in the government.

However, it is logical that due to pressure of the BJP MLAs, the Chief Minister in consultation with the BJP leadership may drop some of the Minister belonging to other coalition partners.

What worries the people is on assuming the state of the government if the non BJP Ministers are removed to provide the post to other BJP MLAs. There is likely that the coalition political party may withdraw their support to the government. If so will there be any impact to the government.

If one takes a breath and thinks about such thing - there is absolutely nothing to worry. The BJP led government will continue as long as it holds power at the center.

If one recalled on how the BJP formed the government in the state with even less number of MLAs than the Congress party, then why should the government worry if some ministers of the partner political parties are dropped.

However, saying so, there may be changed of guard if the BJP led NDA suffer a major setback in the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha.

As of now Chief Minister N. Biren Singh is doing well in strengthening the bondage of relationship between the BJP Ministers, MLAs and his party leaders. The rumours spreading around will remain as it is and will never happen. It is better that we stopped daydreaming and focus more in becoming a watchdog to the activities of the government. And any citizen can be a watchdog as there are various tools to check things that are doing by the government. Finally the government should also stopped intimidation to the watchdogs as they are only hoping for a welfare state.

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# Plastic Pollution & its effect



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Plastic pollution is the accumulation of plastic objects like plastic bottles and much more in the Earth's Environment that adversely affects wildlife, wildlife habitat and humans. Plastics that acts as a pollutants are categorized into micro, meso or macro debris based on size. Plastics are inexpensive and durable and as a result levels of plastic production by humans are high. However the chemical structure of most plastics renders them resistant to many natural process of degradation and as a result they are slow to degrade. Together these two factors have led to a high prominence of plastic pollution in the Environment. Plastic pollution can affect land, waterways and Ocean. It is estimated that 1.1 to 8.8 million metric tons (MT) of plastic waste enters the Ocean from coastal communities each year. Living organisms, particularly marine animals can be harmed either by mechanical effects, such as entanglement in plastic objects or problems related to ingestion of plastic waste or through exposure to chemicals within plastics that interfere with their physiology. Humans are also affected by plastic pollution such as through disruption of various harmful mechanisms.

As of 2018, about 380 million tons of plastic is produced worldwide each year. From the 1950s up to 2018, an estimated 6.3 billion tons of plastic has been produced worldwide, of which an estimated 9% has been recycled and another 12% has been incinerated. In the UK alone, more than 5 million tons of plastics are consumed each year of which only an estimated one quarter is recycled, with the remainder going to landfills. This large amount of plastic waste

inevitably enters the environment with studies suggesting that the bodies of 90% of seabirds contains plastic debris. In some areas there have been significant efforts to reduce the prominence of plastic pollution through reducing plastic consumption and promoting plastic recycling. Some researchers suggest that by 2050 there could be more plastic than fish in the Ocean by weight. Chlorinated plastic can release harmful chemicals into the surrounding soil, which can then seep into groundwater or other surrounding water source and also the ecosystem of the World. This can cause serious harm to species that drink the water. Landfills areas contain many different types of plastics. In these landfills there are many microorganisms which speed up the degradation of plastics. The microorganisms include bacteria such as pseudomonas, nylon eating bacteria and Flavobacteria. These bacteria break down nylon through the activity of the nylonase enzymes. Breakdown of biodegradable plastics release methane, a gas very powerful greenhouse gas that contribute significantly the global warming.

In 2012, it was estimated that, there was approximately 165 million tons of plastics pollution in the world's Ocean. One type of plastic that is of concern in terms of Ocean plastic pollution is nurdles. Nurdles are manufactured plastic pellets used in the creation of plastic products and are often shipped via cargo ship. Many billions of nurdles are spilled into Ocean each year and it has been estimated that globally around 10% of beach litter consist of nurdles. Plastics in Ocean typically degrade within a year but not entirely. In the process, toxic chemicals such as bisphenol A and polystyrene can leach into waters from plastic pollution in Ocean and combined with plastic bags and food containers make up the majority of Ocean debris. One study estimated that there are more than 5 trillion plastic pieces (defined into the four classes of small micro plastics, large micro plastics, meso and macro plastics) afloat at sea. The litter that is being delivered into the Oceans is toxic to marine fish and humans. The toxins that are components of plastics include diethylhexyl phthalate, which is a toxic carcinogen as well as lead,

cadmium and mercury. Plankton fish and ultimately the human race through the food chain, ingest these highly toxic carcinogens and chemical. Consuming the fish that contain these toxins can cause an increase in cancer, immune disorder and birth defects. This was the first study to focus on global drinking water pollution with plastic and showed that with a contamination rate of 94% tap water in United States was the most polluted followed by Lebanon and India. European countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany and France had the lowest contamination rate though still as high as 72%. This means that people may be ingesting between 3,000 to 4,000 micro particles of plastics from tap water per year. This analysis found particles of more than 2.5 micron size, which is 2,500 times bigger than a nanometer. It is currently unclear, if this contamination is affecting human health but if the water is also found to contain nanoparticles pollutants, there could be adverse impacts on human well-being, according to Scientist associated with the study.

Due to the use of chemical additives during plastic production, plastics have potentially harmful effects that could prove to be carcinogenic or promote endocrine disruption. Some of the additives are used as phthalate plasticizers and brominated flame retardants. Through biomonitoring, chemicals in plastics such as BPA and phthalates, have been identified in the human population. Humans can be exposed to these chemicals through the nose, mouth or skin. Some of the chemicals used in plastic production can cause dermatitis upon contact with our skin. Plastic pollution has the potential to poison animals which can then

adversely affect human food supplies. Some marine species such as sea turtles have been found to contain large proportion of plastics in their stomach. When this occurs, the animals typically starves because the plastic block the animals' digestive tract. Sometimes marine mammals are entangled in plastic products such as nets which can harm or kill them.

This is the global scenario in a wider spectrum. Coming down to our tiny state Manipur, which was once a green state, will it be exorbitant to say that Manipur is free from this problem? Everybody will say, no. We all have seen plastic bottles, plastic bags or any other form of plastic everywhere in our state. Plastics in the rivers, on the roadsides, at the playground, in the field, in the lakes and so on. Again, it is reported that 5% of the total solid waste generated in Imphal per day is plastic. If it is so the adverse effect of plastic pollution mentioned above will not leave Manipur aside rather we will have more serious effect. In few days back we all have experienced the problems of solid waste, plastic waste in Imphal Municipality area due to the prevention of dumping these waste at LamdengKhunou by the local people. The inconvenience caused by these waste have been experienced by each one of us. This is just the beginning. Then what shall we do now? It is we, general public to prevent and protect our environment from such serious issue. Simply, waiting action from our leaders who always provide lip service will not solve the problem timely rather we all will go to the hell. So let us reduce the usage of plastic and plastic products for a better and healthy Manipur.

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## Elections 2019 As a Moment of Reckoning for India's Progressive Civil Society

Courtesy The Wire  
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A wide spectrum of civil society groups organised a national people's platform on April 6, 2019, to dialogue with different political parties on 'Jan Sarokar' (People's Agenda), with the objective of bringing the real issues of ordinary citizens to the centre of political debates.

In the last few months, the Indian civil society landscape has seen similar local, regional and national initiatives, essentially to highlight the threats to the founding ideals of the Indian republic. The aim is also to amplify the issues of the most marginalised and excluded - which have often gotten overshadowed by chest thumping 'nationalism' and aggressive Hindutva.

The earliest challenge to Modi narrative came from initiatives located in the civil society - award wapsi, Not in My Name, the post-Una protests, the fight for justice for Rohith Vemula and Karwan-e-Mohabbat. These initiatives not only mounted a serious ideological challenge to the hegemonic Modi narrative, but they also galvanised

non-party political forces to contest the concerted attempts to change the fundamentals of Indian democracy.

However, there is a gulf between these civil society groups - which occupy the space of non-party political formations (a phrase coined by Rajni Kothari) - and the parties active in electoral politics. While these social movements and community groups advocate and dialogue with diverse political parties, they, however, maintain complete autonomy and electoral neutrality, in-spite of significant overlap in political positions.

In the architecture of democracy, civil society plays critical roles and it might be assigned a non-electoral one in politics. However, this is in complete contrast to the Hindutva imagination of civil society as embodied by the RSS and its affiliates.

The RSS and the Sangh parivar (VHP, Bajrang Dal, etc) not only play a proactive role in Indian elections, they also offer cadre and volunteers to the BJP for political mobilisation and canvassing. It even sets the agenda for the BJP government as we have

witnessed with the Modi cabinet making presentations to the RSS for *disha niradesh* (guidance), while continuously working in the social realm for building an ideological and social support base for Hindutva and BJP.

These contrasting conceptions of the civil society's role in electoral politics pose serious implications and fundamental questions for the future of Indian democracy.

**Civil society under Congress**  
The answer to some of these fundamental challenges might be found in the history of the Congress system in India, particularly the phase of Gandhi's leadership and the national movement. The Gandhian articulation of '*sangharsh aur nirmam*' (struggle and constructive work) represents the philosophical and organic unity of these two actions.

Nevertheless, it also articulates the strategic imperative of weaving together struggles led by overtly political formations and the movement building at the grassroots through constructive work. This action in tandem was effectively achieved during the freedom struggle in which the direct political actions were undertaken by the

National Congress and continuous constructive work for constituency building was undertaken by diverse civil society groups associated with the Congress and Gandhi.

Post-independence, several civil society groups were co-opted by the Indian state and gradually the Congress started losing its presence in the civil society spaces. By the late seventies, Congress had vacated much of the civil society spaces and the 80s saw the rise of new social movements and the growth of professional NGOs, which gradually constituted significant parts of the progressive civil society.

The Congress continued losing its political base through the 80s and 90s due to several socio-economic factors, and because of its increasing disconnect with the issues and aspirations of the common people due to its declining base and penetration in civil society. Congress as a mass-based party, as opposed to a cadre-based party, needed the community and grassroots connect provided by civil society groups to nurture its relationships with people.

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