

Editorial

Tuesday, May 21, 2019

Poll result prediction: 'to be or not to be ...'

It's just a day left now. The whole world will know whom the people of India want to hand over the fate of the country. Across the country all preparation has been completed for the counting of the vote under strict surveillance of the Election Commission of India. District administration had already imposed prohibition order under section 2 of the 144 CrPC in all districts where counting will take place.

For the 543 Lok Sabha seats 8,049 candidates are contesting. Interestingly, out of the nearly 900 voters from across the country women's turn out rate was reportedly high. However, number of women candidate still remain below mark even though bill for introduction of 33% reservation seat still is pending. There are 716 women candidates contesting this election which saw only a marginal rise to 9 per cent from 8 per cent in 2014.

The election was held in seven phases from 11 April to 19 May 2019 to constitute the 17th Lok Sabha. The counting of votes will be conducted on 23 May, and on the same day the results will be declared. About 900 million Indian citizens are eligible to vote in one of the seven phases depending on the region. The 2019 elections attracted a turnout of over 67% - the highest ever in the history of Indian general elections, as well the highest recorded participation in Indian elections by women.

As soon as the last phase election concluded on May 19, almost all mainstream media run by multinational company in the country waited no time to complete the voting at some of the state and released the exit poll.

The result of the exit poll broadcasted in almost all media house predicted return of Narendra Damodar Modi as the Prime Minister again. The lowest figure that the BJP under the leadership of Narendra Modi is speculated to cross 272 numbers, which is indeed a magic number to get invitation to form the government. Other report suggested more numbers which indicate that Narendra Modi is sure to return as the Prime Minister for the second consecutive term.

The poll prediction of the national news TV Channels creates a sense of joy to the Modi supporters but upset to many who are against the party. Its natural that a political worker get upset when they falls and have reason to be happy and in celebration mood if the party is reported rise.

But two days - it's just two days left. Peoples' Mandate on who will be handed over the responsibility to shape the fate of the country will be known soon.

The poll prediction by the TV channel has been criticized by many none-NDA leaders. Sashi Tharoor of Congress, Mamta Benjee of TMC etc. are among the many who criticize the poll result prediction.

Some who talk nothing about the result of the exit poll also seems to have no care for the result as some of them have started looking for alliance to form an alternative government. The gesture of Chandra Babu Naidu who had been trying to bridge with leaders of Non BJP political party is a clear indication that he didn't believe in the poll result prediction.

To be not, or to be - a phrase from the Shakespearean play Hamlet need to be reminded here. It's not Hamlet's tragedy, but a tragedy of the common people who consider TV news as their part of life. If the prediction goes right people will keep continue to have trust in media and if it turn out to be a motivational attempt to increase the TRP rating or to get more advertisement revenue, then the forth pillar is in the verge of crumbling.

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International Day of Biodiversity 2019

By - N. Munal Meitei

In the recent past, it is reported that our state is facing the challenges from invasion by army worm in some of our important crops. Such challenges to our live and property are also a part of biodiversity degradation. Many more such issues will be coming up if we continue to ignore and forget to conserve our environment. Everything comes from biodiversity-from the food we eat to the air we breathe. But issues arise threatening this vital part of nature. Threats on endangered species, deforested catchments, depleted watersheds, denuded forests, receding wetlands and other harmful effects of human activities are just some of these many issues. To keep these risks away, we are celebrating International Day of Biodiversity on the 22nd May every year.

Biodiversity refers to the variety and variability of life on Earth. Biodiversity is typically a measure for health of ecosystem of a particular area. It also measures the variation at genetic, species, and ecosystem level. Biodiversity is again the "totality of genes, species and ecosystems of a region". Terrestrial biodiversity is usually greater near the equator, which is the result of the warm climate and high primary productivity. These tropical forest ecosystems cover less than 10 percent of earth's surface but it support more than 90 percent of the world's species. Terrestrial biodiversity is again thought to be up to 25 times greater than ocean biodiversity.

Theme for International Day of Biodiversity 2019 is "Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health." Whether you are in New York or Delhi or Imphal, you have more chances to access to a greater variety of food than our parents or our grandparents once did. But even as the offerings become more diverse, the global diet as a whole- what people actually eat- is becoming more homogenized, and this is more dangerous. This year's celebrations focus on biodiversity as the foundation for our food and health and a key catalyst to transform the food systems and improving human health. The theme aims to leverage knowledge and spread awareness of the dependency of our food systems, nutrition, and health on biodiversity and ecosystems. The theme also celebrates the diversity provided by our natural systems for human existence and well-being on Earth, including climate change mitigation and adaptation, ecosystem restoration, cleaner water and zero hunger, among others.

Biodiversity is like a large tank, from which humans can draw food, water, clothes and even our housing. These are just some examples of the

ecosystem functions that we can get for free from our natural environment. If we want to preserve these free services, we must protect our biodiversity; we have still got left, foster it and give it the space it needs to endure climate change and related environmental threats. It is an "insurance" for life on this Planet, and therefore must be protected at all costs, because it is a universal heritage that can offer immediate advantages to human beings. Biodiversity is as if the natural world is an enormous bank account of capital assets capable of paying life sustaining dividends indefinitely, but only if the capital is maintained. Biodiversity not only supplies us in all basic needs, but also helps us, in dealing with our organic waste. It is proposed that species themselves are the architects of biodiversity, by proportionally increasing the number of potentially available niches in a given ecosystem. The natural species, or biota, are the caretakers of all ecosystems. It may be mentioned that biodiversity has intrinsic aesthetic and spiritual value to mankind in and of itself.

At least 40 per cent of the world's economy and 80 per cent of the needs of the poor are derived from biological resources. In addition, richer the diversity, the greater is the opportunity for economic development, medical discoveries and adaptive responses to fight such new challenges. Biodiversity's relevance to human health is now an international political issue. Biodiversity is the living fabric of our planet. It underpins human wellbeing in the present and future, and its rapid decline threatens nature and people alike.

CBD Graphic Timeline
The Earth's biological resources are vital to humanity's social development. Almost all cultures have their roots in our biological diversity in some way or form. Declining biodiversity is therefore a concern for many reasons. At the same time, the threat to species and ecosystem has never been as great as it is today. From the perspective of biodiversity this means, species are being lost almost not on a daily basis but on seconds, at the rate of one species per 20 minutes. Acknowledgement of these problems, however, means that we can find solutions for them, although most solutions require enormous economic aids and political will which may anchor these coherent problems.

The natural wealth of the Indian subcontinent has remained unique, mysterious and fascinating for nature

lovers for ages. In Indian philosophy, life in any form is deemed sacred and it is advocated that compassion for all living creatures is essential. The worship of nature in all its different forms is an essential part of our cultural legacy.

India owns 7.8% of the recorded species of biodiversity reserved in the planet, though we share only 1.8% of the world's geographical area; over and above harboring 20.6% of world population and 18% of world cattle population. The country is in the 5 hot spots of the world. The rich and fascinating variety of India's biodiversity populates more than 500 species of mammals, 1,220 species of birds, 1,600 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 57,000 species of insects. India harbours 60% of the world's wild tiger population, 50% of Asian elephants, 80% of the one-horned rhinoceros and the entire remaining population of the Asiatic lion.

Yet the biodiversity found within our country is in jeopardy. From pollution to poaching, invasive species to habitat loss and fragmentation, these life forms that we call our biodiversity are not enough to ensure for the future survival.

The challenges of our Keibul Lamjao National Park, the only floating N.P. in the world, the home of our lovely Sangai is also in agony. In the past few weeks, with the dead of many domestic animals in the surrounding villages of the National Park has threatened our Sangai. If the disease continues to spread, there is high possibility of communicating the diseases to Sangai. For domestic animals, treatment may not be a problem but Sangai once infected, it will be a huge problem to protect them and this may lead to wipe out of our state animal for ever. Currently Sangai population is in vulnerable since it is much below the tipping point. The health and survival of our state flower, Siroy lily is also almost same.

In the last 100 years, more than 90 percent of crop varieties have disappeared in this country from the farmers' fields. In our state, many important varieties of rice such as Changlei, Phourel, Kakching phou, Moirangphouet, are becoming extinct. Many of the important indigenous trees of the state are also found to extinct. In the morning we do not hear the awakening songs of the crows. Half of the breeds of domestic animals have also gone. Meitei hui breed may be sited as an example. Manipur has lost almost 18 important species of fishes from its wetlands. As commented earlier, lhal barrage is now to focus for revival of our aqua-biodiversity in the state. Locally-varied



indigenous and traditional food production methods are now under threat. Plastics in all forms- packaging in religious celebrations, serving of hot tea and subjiin hotels and use of non-graded plastic in day today life is really a challenging health hazard in Manipur. Wrappingedibles with newspaper is also equally dangerous.

In the fields, all our local vegetable products have all been sprayed with various insecticides, pesticides and weedicides. Among them, many are already banned on all over the world but are freely using in our state without a restriction. With these injections, our agro-biodiversity is declining day by day. The loss of diverse diets and consumption of hormones and chemicals-rich vegetables is directly linked to diseases and health risk, such as blood pressure, diabetes, obesity and malnutrition, and many other dreaded diseases. While medical sciences improved, people started to ignore the traditional practices which may lead to the extinct of our invaluable indigenous knowledge of Maiba and Maibi.

Preserving biodiversity and human development must go hand-in-hand. Once there was only a choice between development and conservation. But now we realize that we cannot separate these two words any longer. To halt the biodiversity loss the best option being by understanding, appreciating, safeguarding and using biodiversity sustainably.

Future of our valued biodiversity depends on the action and values of people. Local authorities and governments are in the best position to reach out to citizens and involve, enable and inspire local stakeholders. Cultural diversity and biodiversity exist hand in hand. By facilitating a deeper relationship with the environment and the mankind, the world's biodiversity can be conserved for the future generation. Therefore with the coming of the International Day of Biodiversity 2019, let us plant trees and let us not harm to our biodiversity and environment and only then we can make a green, bright and beautiful biodiversity in future.

EARLY LIFE & PEASANT STRUGGLE

PIB future

Born as one amongst five brothers and sisters in a peasant family of Ladbai and Jhaveribhai Patel in village Nadiad in Kaira district of Gujarat, Vallabhbhai was set for a far greater cause of independence and integration of independent India. In his formative years, his mother has had a profound impact on his psychology. Like in a normal rural setting, the mother would gather all her children and narrate stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata. While it impacted the spiritual quotient of young Patel, it was his father who introduced him to the world of peasantry. Young Vallabhbhai used to accompany his father to the fields and eventually became an expert in land tilling and cattle tending, two important aspects of cultivation. Such was his affection to his peasant ancestry that once an American journalist asked him about his cultural activities, to which he retorted, "Ask me another. My culture is agriculture".

The first spate of struggle that brought Patel to public life was primarily his journey as a peasant leader. His foray into public life and eventually into the freedom movement was possible through successful satyagrahas in Barod and Kheda, wherein he through

his exceptional skills in leadership and consensus building brought the British government on knees to agree to the demand for the withdrawal of exorbitant increase in revenue.

Statesmanship and Political Acumen Sardar Patel belongs to the legion of leadership who effectively contributed both to the freedom struggle, and guided the project of national reconstruction following independence.

"We worked hard to achieve our freedom; we shall have to strive harder to justify it". Patel was clearly conscious of the fact that independent India needed a steel frame to run its civil, military, and administrative bureaucracy. His faith in institutional mechanisms like having an organized command based army and a systemized bureaucracy proved to be a blessing. It was Patel who sent Indian navy to the port of Lakshadweep at an appropriate time, as Pakistan was equally keen to occupy the strategically important islands. One can only imagine what would have been the plight had our neighbours succeeded in her plans. He also pre-empted the relevance of Independent Tibet as a buffer state

between India and China, as can be found in his correspondence with Pt. Nehru.

RSS and Sardar Patel

In a letter dated July 16th, 1949 to TR Venkatarama Sastri, Sardar Patel says, "I was myself keen to remove the ban at the earliest possible opportunity.... I have advised the RSS in the past that the only way for them is to reform the congress from within, if they think the congress is going on the wrong path".

In another correspondence the second sarsangchalak of RSS MS Golwalkar writes to Sardar Patel, "I have decided to meet friends like Venkatarama ji etc. After meeting him and after attending to preliminary details with regard to our work, I shall do my best to call on you. I have learnt with sorrow that there has been some deterioration in your health. This indeed has given me much anxiety. The country is in so much need of your able guidance and service. I pray god to grant you long and healthy life. I hope till the time I shall be able to meet you; you would have much improved in your health. Some innermost feelings of heart are inexpressible through the medium of language. I am having such experience while I am writing this letter to you.

The communication establishes the fact that Sardar was open to the idea of "conversation without confrontations". There is a pertinent need to move beyond rhetoric; which can only be made possible through independent research on the subject.

"Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is perhaps the only pragmatist in the Gandhi, Nehru, Patel trio who were the most important people especially in the run-up to independence and immediately afterwards. Most Indians do not realize that the map of India would not look anything like it does today had Patel not contributed to it. Without him, large chunks of India would have broken away through malicious intent. He almost single-handedly prevented this balkanization from happening. The one place where Patel could not entirely implement his wise policies is Kashmir, and we are paying the price for that even today. Next to Gandhi, and sometimes even better than the Mahatma, Patel understood the grassroots ethos and culture of India. If he would have lived even for a decade after independence, possibly many of India's persistent issues would have been resolved", observes Hindol Sengupta, author of the upcoming Patel biography The Man Who Saved India.