

LOK SABHA

SYNOPSIS OF DEBATES (Proceedings other than Questions & Answers)

Friday, November 22, 2019/Agrahayana 1, 1941(Saka)

DISCUSSION UNDER RULE 193 - *Contd.*

Re: Air Pollution and Climate Change

SHRIMATI PROMITA MONDAL: We have had a lot of discussion on this subject but what we actually need is the committees and the reports. 133 crore people of our country need an instant action. The Government need to spread among the masses that as much as it is our responsibility to make provisions, equal participation has to come from their end as well. People of our country are sensible enough to understand it. I also request eminent personalities on social media to initiate the 'ShudhHawa' challenge. I would request the hon. Prime Minister and all other Members to take up this initiative. The Government has to impose a cap on use of coal instead of digging new coalmines. The renewable energy sources must be worked upon. The Government should take strong steps and initiate a stubble collection programme by providing small incentives to attract farmers. We

must impose a strict ban on production and use of fire crackers. People involved in this industry can work in the stubble recycling units.

SHRI BALLI DURGA PRASAD RAO: Whenever an alarming situation arises, we only discuss such issues. The rules and regulations vary from State to State. Besides, climatic conditions prevailing in different States are not similar. Because of change in the climatic conditions, we are losing periodic monsoons. The recent examples are severe floods in Mumbai, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. We have to create awareness among the people to control pollution. In every State, there is a Pollution Control Board. What are their duties and responsibilities? That should be examined in an appropriate manner. There is another issue regarding crackers and stubble burning. You have to make use of this stubble to produce fodder and manure for the farmers. Through soil waste management we can generate power also. I request the Government to take up afforestation with the help of the State Governments.

SHRI NIHAL CHAND CHOUHAN: Today, not only India but also the whole world is affected by air pollution and climate change. Felling of trees has also added to the pollution in our Country. At present, water and atmosphere is increasingly getting polluted in our country. If somebody gets sick then it is not due to air pollution alone it could be the water that irrigates the agricultural field or even the drinking water. I belong to Rajasthan. Polluted water is flowing in to our State from Punjab and that water is causing cancer in the people. The chemical

mixed water from their industries is flowing in to Harike Barrage and from there it is being directly supplied to our canals. As many as 8 districts of Rajasthan are affected by it. The chemical mixed water coming out from industries of Punjab is flowing into the Ganges Canal and Bhakra Canal and is spreading diseases in our State. The NGT has given a direction in this regard to the Punjab government but still the water from the factories of Punjab is flowing into the Rajasthan. Therefore, the supply of chemical mixed water from Punjab into the Canals of Rajasthan should be banned so as to check the air pollution. Today, everyone is criticizing the farmers. But, infact, the atmosphere is being polluted because of the excessive use air conditioners. The carbon emission from vehicles is also causing diseases. I, therefore, demand that the garage should be made mandatory in the Houses for owning a car. If we go into any street of Delhi, we can find 5-10 cars stationed there. The carbon emission from vehicles is also adding to the pollution. There is need to work upon it.

SHRI JAGDAMBIKA PAL: The air pollution has reached ominous proportions in Delhi, NCR, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and other States. The air quality index has reached the disastrous situation owing to which the schools had to be closed down in Delhi. However, there is emerging hope and confidence in the country that the Government is taking short term and long term measures to combat the situation. As many as 7 million deaths are being caused in the world due to poor air quality. We ought to work in unison to resolve these issues.

SHRI ADHIR RANJAN CHOWDHURY: There must be some sorts of global initiatives because the issue of air pollution and climate change is not confined to India or any region. It is a global phenomenon. Since 1992, we have been going towards that direction. We have adopted the United Nations Framework convention besides the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. Nobody under the sun is spared from the onslaught of air pollution and climate crisis. India's total Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in 2014 were 6.55 per cent of global GHG emissions. Air quality in Delhi has gone above the danger level. In Delhi 28 people are dying per day due to pollution. It is really a matter of grave concern. But it is not confined to Delhi itself. Looking at the situation in Delhi even the Supreme Court is scolding us. Air pollution claimed five lakh lives in India in 2016 as per a report. 90 per cent of children are exposed to PM 2.5 levels that are above WHO guidelines, damaging their health throughout their lives. I am suggesting to this Government that they should emulate the technologies followed in other countries so as to prevent the menace of air pollution. The Government has assured the Supreme Court that they are going to adopt hydrogen fuel. I do not know the status of hydrogen fuel. Odd- even drive is a good step. State government and the Central Government should make concerted efforts together. There is a need for climate justice because citizens suffer from the threat which has emanated from climate change. Why should the common people be the victims of the lackadaisical approach adopted by the Government? We need a strong governance

system to move the climate discourse and actions forward. The Government should introduce climate literacy, create climate warriors and climate activities. Under the NDA government, the Minister of Environment and Forest appears to be a pro-business entity focusing on environmental clearance rather than on conservation and pollution prevention. Climate Change was not mentioned even once in the Budget speeches of 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19. Average days for clearance of projects have gone down from 223 days in 2016 to 140 days in 2018 in a hurry to appease business houses at the cost of environment. The National Clean Air Programme covers only 102 cities. It excludes nearly half of the cities of India that flout air pollution norms.

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE; MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF HEAVY INDUSTRIES AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES

(SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR) *replying said* :Today, I feel very happy that perhaps, for the first time in many years, discussion on a subject is going on in the House for the last 3 days. It included the subject of pollution as well as climate change. Both are related to each other and there is difference also. The earth can take care of the needs of everybody but not the greed of anybody. What is this climate change? We should understand the difference between climate change and pollution. The reason for climate change is – emission of Carbon dioxide. It remains on earth for hundreds of years remaining suspended in the air. But, the

pollutants causing pollution remain for a short time and then they disperse. This is the basic difference between the two. Under Indian lifestyle, the entire living and non-living beings have been considered as one. Trees, water, earth, animal, birds - all have the right to exist, this is what our culture believes in. More than 300 people have sacrificed their lives for the protection of trees in the country. This is an example of Indian life values. We can never eliminate the excesses occurring on this earth without changing our lifestyle. The Carbon dioxide exhaled by human beings is absorbed by the trees and in return the trees give us oxygen- this is a natural balance. But, after the industrial revolution, the excess emission of carbon dioxide due to burning of coal remained in the air. It remains suspended for hundreds of years due to which the temperature of earth is rising. India is not responsible for climate change. The per capita carbon emission is 16 tonnes in the US, 13 tonnes in Europe, 12 tonnes in China but in India it is just 1.9 tonnes. Our Carbon emission is 3 per cent only while it is much higher in other countries. We have resolved that we will bring 40 per cent renewable energy under mixed energy. I feel happy to inform today that out of 1,75,000 mw renewable energy announced earlier, 80,000 mw is being produced during the last four years which includes solar, wind and bio-mass energy. We will reduce the emission intensity by 35 per cent. For this purpose, we have changed the norms for all the industries. They have been asked to use the new technologies. We have installed 24 X7 monitoring machines over the chimneys of 3,500 polluting industries. Machines have also

been installed at the point of their water discharge. Today, our emission intensity has come down by 22 per cent. During the last four years, we have increased the green cover by 13,000 square kilometers in the country. The green cover is increasing only in two countries of which India is one. Whatever is required to be done to make green the 2 crore 60 lakh hectares of waste land will be done by India in 10 years. We have a policy for cutting of the trees where five trees have to be planted for cutting one tree. I am happy to say that five times more growth of trees has been achieved for the trees felled for the Delhi Metro. The Indo-Gangetic plane is the most polluted region. Delhi's situation is such that if the wind speed exceeds 20 km. per hour, the atmosphere is cleared. However, when the wind speed is below 20 km. per hour, the pollution level increases. There are four causes of pollution viz. industries, vehicles, dust and bio-mass burning. We have to work consistently to solve this problem. In order to mitigate the industrial pollution in Delhi, we closed down the Badarpur Thermal Power Station. There are other power plants in the country for which we have set new norms. New technology is being brought. Use of pet coke and furnace oil has been banned, 2800 units have been switched to PNG. Introduction of Ujjwala Yojana and promotion of LED lights has also been beneficial. It has resulted in mitigation of emission and pollution. Metro has resulted in fewer traffic jams on roads. This also mitigated pollution. Railway has been expanded. India is the first country in the world to propel commercial bombardier aircraft on bio-fuel. Use of e-vehicles

is being promoted. Now, we are mixing 5-10 per cent ethanol with petrol. Earlier, 60,000 non-Delhi destined trucks used to cross Delhi but after construction of Eastern Peripheral Expressway and Western Peripheral Expressway, they are bypassing Delhi. There is alluvial soil in the Indo-Gangetic belt. So, this region faces a lot of dust pollution. Dust suppression chemicals are used to suppress the dust. Bio-mass burning is a big issue. Mining also raises dust. We have made strict rules to deal this issue. BS-IV fuel is available across the country whereas BS-VI is available in Delhi. From April 1, BS-VI petrol-diesel will be available across the country as a result of which vehicular pollution will be reduced by 80 per cent. Every city has its peculiar problem hence we have prepared National Clean Air Programme to formulate city-specific plans. We all have our roles to play in this regard. The more trees we plant, the less will be the pollution. We have introduced 'School Nursery Scheme'. People are also becoming more aware. Now, fewer fire crackers are burst on Diwali. We all should inculcate habits of saving water, planting trees, picking plastic wastes and using cycle for short distances. We have created a National Knowledge Network. Scientists meet on daily basis to find out the measures to mitigate pollution. So far as the CAMPA Fund is concerned, it was not being released to the states for the last 15 years due to a Supreme Court verdict. However, we made our point before the Supreme Court that it could be used immediately and I am happy to inform the House that we called a meeting of the Forest Minister of all the States and released Rs.47,000

crore. Maharashtra got Rs.3400 crore out of it. It is very important to create carbon sink and we have introduced Urban Forestry Scheme for this purpose. Incentivizing the industries by emission trading is an innovative initiative. Practice of giving star rating in Jharkhand is also a good initiative. Agro-forestry or '*Har Medh Par Ped*' is also very important. We have issued directions to discourage use of single use plastic. We are providing funds for every city under the National Clean Air Programme. We will soon make some rules regarding Lithium batteries. For cloud seeding, there have to be some cloud conditions in the atmosphere. I hope we will be able to crack the issue of Hydrogen fuel too. We will certainly consider the written suggestions or issues submitted by the hon. Members.

The discussion was concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILL

Compulsory Voting Bill, 2019 - *Contd.*

SHRI DUSHYANT SINGH *resuming his speech said:* There was an ambience of happiness across the country in 2019 as our hon. Prime Minister succeeded in winning 303 seats as compared to 282 seats in the last elections. Moreover, the voting percentage has also gone up in these elections due to a number of good works carried out by him. We also need to be thankful to the founding fathers of the constitution of our country who secured the right to

exercise franchise for every citizen of the country. Why do we cast our vote? The only purpose we have in our mind is to enable the representatives to have their seat in the Panchayat, legislative assemblies leading to development work in their respective jurisdiction and constituency. We are trying hard to have meeting with everyone to get the work done. Whenever there is an election everyone should come forward. We can't compel anyone to exercise his or her franchise. Yet we can persuade them to partake in the election. This shall be possible only when the Government makes a mechanism under which the elderly people living in old age homes, overseas Indians and even those admitted in hospitals are enabled to cast their vote. Last but not the least, I hold the firm conviction that whole electoral process must encompass each and every citizen of the country as parties may come and go but democracy shall remain forever.

DR. SATYA PAL SINGH: Enacting a law to make voting compulsory will be a severe jolt to the spirit of democracy as this will deprive the people of choosing their choice of what to do and what not to do. There was a lot of discussion on whether casting vote should be made compulsory or not while we were in the process of amending the Constitution of India in order to incorporate fundamental duties therein in 1976. Finally, it was decided that casting vote should not be made a fundamental duty. However, such a provision may be proposed to be made for the region like Jammu and Kashmir where voting percentage hardly goes beyond 7-9 per cent. Whether we are able to implement

such a provision that makes voting compulsory in a country of 90 crore voters. There was not any remarkable increase in the voting percentage even in the country where voting has been made compulsory. To create any sort of compulsion in regard to casting vote will be a tantamount to throttling down the spirit of democracy. Nowadays, boycotting elections has become a democratic way of protest. Unfortunately, the vote cast by a hooligan carries the value as equal as those cast by an educated person or a parliamentarian or an MLA in the name of democracy in this country. Hence, the House should discuss the ways to determine the value of vote cast by the educated persons and the hooligans. So, the people should be given the right to freedom instead of making voting compulsory. This issue also came up before the hon. Supreme Court and subsequently Tarkunde Committee was constituted and the Law Commission held a long deliberations on it. The erstwhile Chief election Commissioner said on this issue if we make voting compulsory for 80 crore people and 8 crore out of them did not turn up to cast their votes, how would we be able to bring them to book? To what extent the machinery will be required to work to complete this exercise and how much money will be spent on it and finally whether the entire exercise will be of any benefit to the nation.

SHRI GOPAL SHETTY: I agree with this view that even if provision of compulsory voting is not there, more and more people should vote. The people should be encouraged for this. The percentage of voting will improve if we make

aware the young people and the society as a whole. Long ago the percentage of voting was not more than 30-40 per cent but today it is 70-80 per cent. If the percentage of voting increases, the representatives attentively take care of their Constituency and democracy will be strengthened. We should take effective steps so that representatives of criminal mindset are not elected. We should provide a right direction to the young generation. I am happy that our country is witnessing a dramatic change. Now-a-days, people of this country are politically matured. They have started electing good people. Social media has also played a major role. If we have to make the voting compulsory, we will have to prepare a proper mechanism. I support the provisions of compulsory voting.

SHRI RAVI KISHAN: I support compulsory voting. Many undeserving people get elected who have done something wrong for the country. This practice was not good for the democracy. When you want to have your right, you have to vote also. In our country, young generation constitutes 65 per cent and we have to make them aware. If the people want to have their rights and facilities, they must vote. Today, in the leadership of Hon. Prime Minister the country is heading towards progress and a new India is emerging. Now, the criminals are not getting elected. Not even a single corrupt representative is sitting here. This is a big change. Therefore, we should make the voting compulsory in the country.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: This Bill is not sufficient to serve the purpose. It is because if you want to have compulsory voting, definitely, an

amendment to the Constitution is required. I am very proud to say that India is the biggest democracy in the world. So, Parliamentary democratic system of the country has to be strengthened. Maximum voting percentage is required to have a healthy democracy. It is because if participation of people is not there in the electoral process, then what is the meaning of democracy? We have to find out the reasons by which why the electoral percentage of the voting percentage is coming down. It is because the people are losing their confidence in the democratic system. There are so many defects and laggings in the democratic system which is prevailing in our country. That is why, people are not very much interested in coming and participating in the electoral process. We cannot agree for this provision in Clause 8 of the Bill. I have the right to vote. At the same time, I am having the right to not to vote. Compulsory voting means that it is taking away the democratic right of a citizen of the country. So, we cannot support the compulsory voting in our country. Instead of penalizing the citizens who have not cast vote in the electoral process, give some incentives to those who have voted in the election. The Government should give some incentives to the people so as to bring them to the polling booths. Secondly, if you are insisting on compulsory voting, then a Constitutional amendment should be made that a Government can be formed only if a party or a coalition is having not less than 51 per cent of the total votes cast. We have to cure the defects in the electoral process. Drastic structural electoral reforms are the need of the hour so as to strengthen and bring a healthier

democratic system. I also suggest the State funding of elections. The other point that I want to raise is about the electronic voting machine. We should go back to the manual voting so as to have the credibility of the voting system in our country. The last point that I want to raise before this House is regarding voting by Non-Resident Indians. The NRIs should be given the right to vote so that more electoral participation could be possible. I would suggest that let the Government think of having a comprehensive legislation on electoral reforms so that the entire democratic system of our country can be strengthened in a better way.

PROF. SOUGATA RAY: I appreciate the intention behind the introduction of the Bill, yet I have to oppose the Bill because in democracy there cannot be any element of coercion. The solution is that we have to lead a campaign to increase the awareness of the people. I think that the term of Parliament should be fixed for five years so that there is no incentive for anybody to encourage defections. The other thing is that electronic voting machines should be done away with. We should bring a Bill in Parliament for scrapping the electronic voting machine system. Money power is a big problem in our elections. But, the electoral bond system which had been introduced to curb money power is not transparent. I would urge the Government to please do away with electoral bonds.

SHRI BHAGIRATH CHOUDHARY: Voting is a duty performed towards the nation. But unfortunately, the educated people feel a kind of shame while exercising their voting right. We need to develop a system so as to enhance

the voting percentage and electoral participation. We should also introduce provisions to deprive the people with criminal background of their voting right while incentivizing those common people who cast their vote.

KUNWAR PUSHPENDRA SINGH CHANDEL: In the first place, I am of the opinion that NOTA must be done away with as I personally feel that it is just a tool to misguide people. In fact, the provision of NOTA discourages those who vote. Massive polling leads to the formation of stable government. So, it is necessary to have a thrust on fair voting. At the same time, there is a need to put a check on the polling largely guided by caste or religious consideration. Besides, there should be special arrangement for enabling the poll of Army personnel, Paramilitary forces, Non-Resident Indians, migrated students, the veterans, ailing people, labourers, guards, drivers, cooks and waiters as well as the other working persons employed in the unorganized sectors. In a bid to encourage and incentivize those who passionately partake in the voting process, there must be a database at block level to identify the villages with higher percentage of voting in order that somewhere down the line this may cause essence of competition among the people residing in other villages to exercise their franchise.

SHRI P. P. CHAUDHARY: Democratically, Will of the people is supreme and we can't make it compulsory. Nowhere do we find mention that right to vote is a constitutional right. Under the Constitution of India as well as under the Representation of People's Act right to vote is a statutory right. The framers of our

Constitution were of the view that we can term it as a human right though. Efforts should be made to increase the percentage of polling through reforms. Increase in polling percentage is essential for healthy democracy. The fact remains that we just can't afford to make voting compulsory, however, certain provisions can be made for incentives on this count. We can effect certain markings in the Aadhaar taking the leaf out of the developed countries and the extension of certain benefits or incentives can be a factor based on voting pattern. This kind of reform is called for in this perspective. Once the polling is over, there ought to be a full-fledged Research Wing to find out as to why percentage of voting has been low in a particular area. This kind of research wing can be put in place at the district level as well as at the block level. Further, for the determination of polling booth other than population, spatial distance must be a decisive factor. In the event of polling booth being available in close proximity, those willing to cast vote would be encouraged leading to increase in polling. We can have a mechanism in place for the private and unorganized sector, in order that they may cast their vote at their respective polling booths. In a time and age largely driven by technological intervention we can have this mechanism at each and every location. This mechanism will definitely help increase the polling percentage, I believe. We can simply persuade the voters to cast their votes to strengthen Indian democracy. To make voting compulsory would in itself be anti-democratic. Additionally, in case

of being so, there would be violation of Article 2 of the Human Rights Declaration as well. (*Speech unfinished*)

The discussion was not concluded.

SNEHLATA SHRIVASTAVA
Secretary General

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NOTE: It is the verbatim Debate of the Lok Sabha and not the Synopsis that should be considered authoritative.

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