

Address of Hon'ble Shri Sudhir Mungantiwar, Minister for Finance, Planning and Forest, Maharashtra State during the function of inauguration of Biodiversity Bhavan at Nagpur on 28-3-2015.

(Freelance English translation of Marathi Speech delivered by the Hon. Minister)

Hon'ble Anup Kumarji, Hon'ble Saxenaji, Hon'ble Sarjan Bhagatji, Hon'ble Nigamji, Hon'ble A. S. K. Sinhaji, Shri Prakash Thosare, ex member of MPSC, who is prominently present for this programme and present on the dias, my journalist friends, and respected ladies and gentlemen, I declare, in your august presence, that Maharashtra State Biodiversity Board Bhavan is inaugurated. I heartily extend my good wishes to the winners of photographic competition. I congratulate those also who caught up best of the nature scenes through their lenses, and my good wishes are with them.

I feel that Shri Sanjayji was first to book solar cooker, hence it was presented to him in this function. May I wish that all should get inspired to use solar cooker like him. By the way, Shri Sanjayji, I may visit your home to confirm that you are using solar cooker regularly.

Hon'ble Shri Dilipji made very impressive presentation before you to imbibe importance of biodiversity. Dilipji you are shouldering this heavy responsibility. Rather I should say that the name Dilip, itself, embodies responsibility, and its meaning is protection. Biodiversity chain is God's gift and as such it should not be discontinued. Before I assumed charge of Forest Ministry, I may tell you, that constituency which I represent is full of thriving forests, wild life. I feel proud to inform you that the highest number of tigers, in the State, are in my constituency. It did not strike you, but you understood it. I shared my concern with Shri Uddhav Thakareji when I told him, that it is my sacred duty to protect and conserve tigers of my State.

Importance of biodiversity is aptly reflected in our culture, religion, so as to continue the chain of biodiversity. I recall vividly that during installation of Shri Ganesh idol, my mother used to send me to collect 21 types of green leaves for offering to Shri Ganesh. I did not understand its significance then, but today I understand its link with conservation of biodiversity. Now a days, there are discussions in Assembly on climate change, global warming. Those phrases I did not hear from my teachers in my school

days. Last year there was estimated cost of Rs. 7.5 thousand crores to mitigate the climate change problem. This issue has come up since man continues to neglect biodiversity leading to its deterioration.

Human being with its misdeeds and greed has become an arch enemy of itself since he is indulged in acts that may lead to destroying this world. It is contrasting, but it is true that while man may extinct, biosphere may continue and remain alive. But mute question is that, then who is going to save forest when the world itself is extinct; even the man can not save it.

Somebody made a passing comment in a lighter vein that whole world is running after currency notes. But, alas, they did not know that currency paper is made from trees and when trees are not there, how currency would be made, and how people would be rich, etc. In nut shell, this is the importance of trees, if trees are there one is rich; otherwise not, so biodiversity is an important issue and to keep alive biodiversity, people should participate in this campaign. And I assure you Shri Dilipji, I would be with you not only as a Forest Minister, but also as Finance Minister.

We took many decisions this year. We have increased estimated budget and without imposing any cut, we propose to retain at its 100% to meet requirements of the forest department; since it's a challenge we are facing today. This challenge should not be confined to today's inaugural programme only and should be faced by your active participation. Mere resolve would not do any good; as is evident from one anecdote from a scene in Akbar's court. One day a person who played multi-roles (bahurupiya) appeared in the court in the role of a cow and imitated cow by bellowing like it, moving its tail etc. King Akbar was delighted by the act. However, Birbal, who watched it, intervened and placed a stone on its back, the skin of cow vibrated. A cow make a movement of its back; it can vibrate. Birbal immediately acknowledged the skill of actor and he was paid in gold for his enactment. In another anecdote, Birbal was tasted, as he was asked to identify the mother tongue of a person who was a polyglot. Birbal simply poured a bucket full of water on his head at midnight, the person reacted to this incidence in his mother tongue. Similarly, there is a story wherein the man was preaching for atheism in his sermon. After that he went home. While going back he asked his driver to stop for a while since there was a temple. Driver asked him why did

he stop here? The man replied that he did not want to take risk. Essence of these stories is that we have to prove our intent to save biodiversity by deeds and not by mere saying or discussing it. This Biodiversity Board was formed in 2012 and a lot of work is to be done in this field. We have requested the Central Govt. to issue notification regarding 161 plant species and 48 animal species to be declared as endangered species under Biodiversity Act. We need not simply wait for the notification to come out; we should follow it. After all it concerns the forest and biodiversity which is equally important like liberating one's soul after its death, as per our culture. So whether it is obtaining '*mukti*' or getting rich, one is connected in some way or the other with forest and so also with the biodiversity. Hence it is our prime concern to make this movement reaching to the masses, as such it should not merely be a Govt. programme; since it has its own limitations. In this context, I remember back in 1994, when I was not MLA, many hoardings were displayed on the walls of the Collector's office at Buldhana saying the illiterates to educate themselves. Tell me what is the use of these large hoardings; when an illiterate person cannot read those? What I mean to say is to imbibe culture of biodiversity conservation; it is not a job of the government alone. We have to come forward and carry this movement, since government programme has its own limitations. Now you informed me about the pattern, and filling of 108 posts in the department. The new recruitment proposal is usually negated by Govt. due to its policies; but we can fill it on contract basis; I will think about it. Similarly, this Board is presently bereft of its 'Chairman'. I will provide it within a month, so give a suitable proposal. It requires attitude to resolve a problem.

Today, this office of Biodiversity Board is inaugurated. This board should strive to protect and conserve biodiversity in times to come. As per the meaning of '*karyalaya*', we may go for making it '*aalay*', so that it provided guidance to take up biodiversity work ahead. I attended this programme, on my own to extend my good wishes for success to the cause, in spite of the fact today being '*Ramnavami*'; and I am required to be in my constituency. At last I would like to confide in you to please participate in this endeavour in positive manner. If we do not retract our correct path at this juncture, to achieve the goal, we may err like cleaning the mirror when dust is on one's face. If we would have grown enough trees we would not need an AC. But we indulged in large scale tree

felling and consequently are facing electricity shortage day in and day out. This is all due to lending deaf ears to this problem. Now this is time to go for indigenous approach to conservation instead of continuing rampant over exploitation. Let us resolve that we sincerely take up this issue in right earnest. As far as I am concerned, I shall devote gain fully to fulfill my part of responsibility and evoke your positive response to contribute to this noble cause. I suggest you, Dilipji, to prepare a TV serial or a good documentary/film on importance of biodiversity to make people aware of this sensitive issue. This is a good and effective way to mobilise people's support and active participation. I pray to God to help us in these efforts. I greet you once more and thank you.

Jai Vidarbha, Jai Maharashtra !

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