

## TACKLING HUMAN-ANIMALS CONFLICTS

Right from the very beginning, several incidents were reported regarding human-animal conflicts, due to which whereon one hand, humans have faced a lot of problems and sometimes even precious lives were lost, but in the long run it is animals which have faced wrath. One can easily judge the height of ill-impact of these effects on animals that even some species reached near verge of extinction. The scenario in urban areas is even also quite serious as several incidents of bites by stray animals are reported. From time to time, the Government has taken several effective steps for tackling the issue. In this regard, the Central Government has notified Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023 vide G.S.R 193(E) dated March 10, 2023 under Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act, 1960 and after superseding Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules, 2001. The Rules have addressed the guidelines of the Supreme Court in the Writ Petition No. 691 of 2009 between Animal Welfare Board of India and People for Elimination of Stray Troubles. The Supreme Court has in various orders specifically mentioned that relocation of dogs cannot be permitted. As per extant Rules, Animal Birth Control programme for sterilization and immunization of the stray dogs are to be carried out by respective local bodies/ municipalities/ Municipal Corporations and Panchayats. Also, the cruelty involved for carrying out of ABC programme need to be addressed. By effective implementation of these Rules, the Animal Birth Control programme can be conducted by the local bodies which will help in reducing the stray dog population addressing the animal welfare issues. The Municipal Corporations need to implement the ABC and Anti-Rabies Programmes jointly. The Rules also provide the guidelines how to deal with the human and stray dog conflicts without relocating the dogs in an area. One of the requirements under the Rule is that the Animal Birth Control Programme needs to be carried out by AWBI recognized organization specifically recognised for Animal Birth Control programme. The list of such Organizations will be made available on the website of the Board which will also be updated time to time. The Central Government has already issued letters to all the State Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries of Animal Husbandry Department and Urban Development Department. Therefore, the local bodies are requested to implement the Rules in letter and spirit and not to permit any Organizations to carry out ABC programme which are not recognized by AWBI and approved for ABC programme or otherwise elaborated in the Rules.

## Biodiversity, an one-time endowment

■ G L KHAJURIA

Nearly 1.75 million species of plants, animals and microbes have been documented so far, while around 10 to 15 million of this number are expected to be waiting for their turn of documentation after giving scientific names, this enormous diversity is not however evenly distributed over the globe and insofar India is concerned. India has been recognized to be one out of 12 mega diversity areas of the world. The Indian sub-continent is also one of the eight centres of the origin of cultivated plants. The current inventory of Indian flora and fauna includes 1700 species of flowering plants as per report of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF), Government of India. The biological resources of the earth are vital to humanity that depends upon them for clean environment, food security, health care and of course social needs, sources of livelihood, trade, industrial growth and economic development and many more their offshoots. The growing awareness of the implications and consequences of basic facts during the last four and half decades brought the issued related to conservation and sustainable utilization of natural resources to the centre stage paving the way for the biological diversity. The legal binding international treaty satisfied by 168 countries including India recognizes the sovereign rights of nations over their bio resources and states the obligations enjoined upon by the contracting party. In order to further this argument, let us replicate that plants are capable of capturing the energy from the sun through a process of photosynthesis and generating the net primary product (NPP) which serves as the resources for the growth and sustainability of all bio forms.

In general the completion amongst plant species for land allocation and the competition among other life forms for NPP allocations constitute the core of national evolutionary process. Threat to biological diversity arises when the rate of extinction of species for exceeds the rate of speciation. Risk analysis can also be done in respect of individual species on the basis of several quantitative criteria developed by IUCN for categorization of species as are endangered, threatened, rare and venerable and this information is crucial for undertaking appropriate rescue operation, remedial measures as well as to collect germplasm for ex situ conservation. Since the beginning of architecture around 10000 years are so back, humans are continuously engaged in converting natural resources (Forest land) into their more selective and productive forms as for example conversion into farm lands, pursuit of development, real estate, factories and their allies. All these are unison tantamount to endangerment of biological resources. While this reallocation of resources has already benefited human societies and their associated species (associated livestock and their cultivated plants). Consequently this has drastically reduced the resources to other species. The extent of population explosion together with their live stocks during the last five and half decades illustrated the vital points. Another equally distributing factor is development in that all societies are adopting strategies of obtaining their needs from a mere handful of species. And increasingly it is the same small group of species which sustain every society. So it is quite obvious from the forgoing that a particular output from natural evolutionary process get selected by its compatibility to successfully interact within the system though its role in the ecosystem. In other words the evolution of a particular species is an indicator of its capacity. to act by itself and also to interact with other species in the eco system. Bio diversity conservation essentially means the conservation of unique characteristic of the output from a rigorous evolutionary process. Every species and its genotype is the unique in its entire spectrum. To replicate biodiversity is important not for the save of verity alone but more so because it is the output from evolutionary process around four million years old. Every existing species is in a way, an encapsulated history of the process and represents an entirely unique set of genetic information. It can't be created or syntheses artificially with available tools. Extinction of a species in as thus as inseparable loss. It is of course not worthy that living organisms may be treated as renewable since they are capable of reproduction and can be multiplied based on inherited genetic information but the aggregation of genetic differences represented at species level may best be encapsulated as a non renewable resource. In a way, bio-diversity exists at the interface between two broad group: renewable and non renewable resources. It shares the commonality with other ancient non-renewable resources viz fossil fuel, fertile soil and vast aquifers in the sense that t is one time endowment from nature to earth and cannot be replaced on any time scale relevant to humanity. At the same time, it is also distinguishable from them because of its naturalness, implying that it is not possible to substitute human synthesis inputs or processes for important attributes of bio-diversity that are the outputs of natural evolution and co-evolution.

(The author is Former Deputy Conservator of Forests, J&K).

# Mann Ki Baat: Nation-building through Jan Bhagidari

■ JUSTICE K C BALAKRISHNAN



India, that is Bharat, completed 75 years of its Independence on 15th August, 2022. Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi brought forth to our nation and its rich civilization the vision for its 'Amrit Kaal' - the next 25 years till the centenary of its precious freedom in the Vikram Samvat 2104 (Gregorian year 2047), which is a period of infinite possibilities and transformation for our beloved country Bharat. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ushered in a new era of growth and achievements for our country by his vision and diligence in creating this truly remarkable path forward for all our citizens. One initiative by the Prime Minister that has stood out, out of the many outstanding initiatives he has taken for the upliftment and better governance of our country is his programme, Mann Ki Baat. Mann Ki Baat is a unique radio programme which was incepted in Vikram Samvat 2071 (Gregorian year 2014), through which Prime Minister has not only established direct contact with those citizens who are hardest to reach but also the most down trodden in our society. Mann Ki Baat is wonderful in its essence because it creates a direct connect between the listener and the Prime Minister. One feels that he or she is being addressed directly by Prime Minister, as their well-wisher and guide

on an intellectual, spiritual and individual level. Prime Minister has established this practice of addressing the Nation without any fail. No matter what the challenge was before us as a nation, the Prime Minister has never relented in discharging his role as a leader of our country. This transformative radio programme which has been the ushered for several significant social and cultural mass movements in the country was started in October 2014 and is reaching the milestone of 100 episodes on 30th April 2023.

Prime Minister has ushered in the Amrit Kaal by laying down the 'Panch Pran' i.e., five pledges that every citizen of Bharat must take to lay the unshakable foundation of the future Bharat. Each of these Panch Pran is focused on inspiring action, and facilitating Nation building. The Pran include the goal of a developed Bharat; removing any traces of colonial mind set; celebrating our heritage; strengthening unity and focusing on our duties. Bharat in the last decade has recorded spectacular growth in its various sectors with the Prime Minister's resolve to build an Atmanirbhar Bharat. It is evident from the fact that during the unprecedented challenge of Covid-19 pandemic, Bharat was able to produce indigenous vaccines for the benefit of its citizens and the World. The Prime Minister urged Bharat to become a self-reliant nation and a strong global economic force on 'Mann ki Baat' during the pandemic. Bharat has resolved to excel in its civilisation-



al goals which include social stability, economic prosperity, cultural safeguard and evolution, which are contemporaneous with its roots. Prime Minister has effectively conveyed and manifested the spirit of this resolve in the people of our country through his programme Mann Ki Baat.

Prime Minister has continuously inspired citizens of the country to become agents of change and contribute to national development. Mann Ki Baat has been a stellar platform for promoting Start-up India campaign, fuelling innovation and entrepreneurship among young people in India. The digital revolution in our country, to the largest scale, has been popularised through this medium. 'Mann ki Baat' has been a bulwark in popularizing all-round developments in the country. Mann Ki Baat is yet another tool for transforming the lives of our citizens and uniting them to contribute to the broader goal of a developed nation. Prime Minister recognizes that our Art, Literature and Culture are pillars of structuring a new Bharat. He has not only taken this responsibility upon himself to inform the general public about the collective wealth of our society through Mann Ki Baat but has taken many initiatives to retrieve and rebuild our pillars of Art, Literature and Cultural heritage. Prime Minister has shown his faith in the nation's ability to take on the role of a global leader as a true representative of the

country. He promotes the concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' on the world stage through his initiatives. This has created a positive impact on citizens who feel proud and motivated to work towards the goal of Bharat becoming a 'Vishwa Guru'. While giving the clarion call for 'Amrit Kaal' to the nation, Prime Minister said that this is the right time to embark on a journey of achievements based on our talent, resources and strength. He added the call of 'Sabka Prayas' to the mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas', invoking the people to make their contribution in the journey of building an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. The Prime Minister laid down the path of 'Amrit Kaal' setting the goal of ascending new heights of prosperity, while bridging the rural-urban divide and promoting the less government, more governance mantra for the nation. It has been established that the rise of New Bharat can undoubtedly be ensured with the participation, dedication and commitment of every Indian. And Mann Ki Baat will continue to be a driving force in this direction, highlighting the nation's progress through Jan-Bhagidari. Therefore, bringing the nation closer to continually achieving its goals and perpetually instilling the spirit of nationalism and patriotism in India i.e., Bharat. It will be interesting to see what the centenary episode of this iconic radio programme which will be live on 30th April 2023, brings forth.

(The author is former Chief Justice of India).

# Holy month of Ramadan and its significance

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

The month of Ramadan is the pious month in Islamic calendar and it is the month of total fasting and is observed by the Muslims all over the world. This month has special significance for Muslims and it is the month of not only fasting but of self-control, self-discipline, charity, austerity and remembrance of God and during this holy month Muslims make it sure that they will abstain from doing bad things and do good to the people especially help financially and through other austerity. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting prayer, reflection and doing good to others. It teaches us self control, discipline and abstinence from the material pleasures. It is observed as the commemoration of Prophet Muhammad's first revelation. The annual observance of Ramadan is regarded as one of the five pillars of Islam and lasts from 29 to 30 days from sighting of the crescent moon to next month. During this holy month complete fast is observed by Muslims from dawn to sun set. The fast from dawn to sun set is Fard -obligatory for all adult Muslims who are not acutely or chronically ill, travelling, elderly, breastfeeding, diabetic or menstruating. The pre-dawn meal is referred to as Suhur and nightly feast that breaks fast is called in Islamic parlance as Iftaar. Although Fatwas had been issued declaring that Muslims who live in regions with a midnight sun or polar night should follow the timetable of Mecca. It is common practice to follow the timetable of the closest country in which night can be distinguished from the day. The spiritual rewards of fasting are believed to multiplied during Ramadan. Accordingly during the hours of fasting Muslims refrain not only from food and drink but also from tobacco products, sexual relations and sinful behavior, devoting themselves instead to Salat-prayer and study of holy Quran.

This year Ramadan began on Wednesday, March 22, 2023, with devotion and faith. It is worth mentioning that final evening of Ramadan consists of a celebration called Eid-ul-Fitr with a big feast and the poor and needy people are provided help by the well to do people and this exhibits the spirit of equality in Islam-the religion of peace and benevolence. The significance of the Ramadan in the life of the Muslims cannot be exaggerated and it is in the fitness of things to throw light on the importance of the celebration and observance of the Ramadan. As the blessed month Ramadan draws near, Muslims around the world wait anxiously and in joyous anticipation of the opportunity to observe fasting, which is the fourth pillar of the Islamic faith and Muslims all around the world welcome the coming of the month of Ramadan. The Ramadan each year sparks interest and awareness that raises several questions regarding month long fasting. Is it an aimless exercise of austerity or a religious discipline promising moral, physical, and spiritual development and advancement? Is this the novel practice introduced by Islam? How do various world religions inculcate fasting and what is the true concept of fasting in Islam? What is the significance of Ramadan itself and what are the objectives of the fasting that a Muslim strives to achieve in this month? Fasting can be commonly defined as 'Abstaining from all or some kinds of food or drink especially as a religious observance. The incorporation of fasting in world religions signifies that the scope of fasting reaches well beyond the simplicity of absenteeism from food and drinks. Observance of fasts is an important part of Hindusim as Hindus all over the world observe fast on various religious festivals. Islam ordain its followers to observe fasts but in different ways and it is worth mentioning that Muslim fasting is very strict and hard in observance as a strict formalities and restrictions

are followed by the believers during the Ramadan and so fasting is very unique and distinct in religion of Islam and even taking of even water and smoking of all kinds is not allowed in fasting by Muslims and thus fasting in Islam denotes a rigorous discipline and adherence to set rules and formalities by the people. Fasting is regarded by the world religions primarily as a mode of self-reflection, moral conditioning and spiritual advancement. Interestingly, fasting is not a novel practice introduced by Islam. Thus the practice of fasting in Islam is an extension of the practice found in earlier religions. In Hinduism, fasting is known as Upavasa. It is a common expression of religious commitment and is undertaken as part of an ascetic routine. The fasting has got much importance in Sanatan Dharma and many Hindu rituals start with fasting. Upvasa can also refer to an all inclusive -abstention from all forms of sensual gratification. In Islam fasting is not only a physical exercise but a spiritual one, the ultimate aim of which is the attainment of God's pleasure through regulation of one's life in accordance with His ordinances. If a Muslim merely observes the outward requirements of the fast, they will simply succeed in making themselves hungry as well as thirsty and nothing more. Explaining true essence of fasting in Islam, Hazrat Ghulam Ahmad, a promised Messiah and founder of Ahmadiya Muslim community stated, "Fasting is not merely staying hungry and thirsty, but its reality and impact can only be gained through experience.

It is human nature, that less one eats, the more ones spirit is purified and thus his capacity for spiritual visions increases. The will of God is to decrease one kind of sustenance and to increase the other.

A person who is fasting should always be mindful that he is just not required to stay hungry. On the contrary he should

remain engaged in remembrance of God so that he can cut asunder the ties of worldly desires and amusements and is wholly devoted to Almighty." Hence the significance of fasting is this alone that man gives up one kind of sustenance which only nourishes the body and attains other kind of sustenance which is a source of comfort and gratification of the soul." Indulgence in unbecoming speech and inappropriate actions nullifies the very objective of fasting in Islam. This is why the Holy Prophet of Islam has taught that, 'He who does not shun telling a lie by word and deed, should know that God needs not his abstinence from food and drink.' It should be noted that fasting in Islam has set and strict rules and regulations which a believer has to follow in letter and spirit while observing fasting in Ramadan, otherwise fasting will only imply to be hunger and thirsty. Muslim fasting is not that easy, but the believers observe fasting during Ramadan in true religious spirit by following all the rules, regulations and commandments of the God and his prophet. It should be understood that fasting has special importance in Islam and the devote Muslims observe fasting with their mind fixed on God and this surely bestows the blessings of the almighty on those who observe fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. To conclude one can say that fasting is not merely keeping oneself hungry and thirsty but there is a big scientific philosophy behind fasting during Ramadan and so all Muslims should observe fasting during Ramadan for obtaining the blessings of the almighty Allah. May this year's fasting purify our body and soul and also bring peace, security, prosperity, happiness and above all contentment and let us all pray to Almighty who is the supreme lord of the universe and all powerful and merciful. May He purify us from all our sins!

(The author is a columnist, social and KP activist).

# Empty forest syndrome

■ KANCHAN BASU

Three Miles from our winter home and in the heart of the forest, there is an open glade. It was in this glade, that I first saw the tiger, who was known as 'The Bachelor of Povalgarh', from 1920 to 1930 and was the most sought-after big-game trophy in the province, said Jim Corbett in Man-Eaters of Kumaon (1944). The Bachelor, described by hunters to be 'as big as a Shetland pony' was arguably one of the biggest tigers to have ever lived. He met his end at the hands of Corbett in the spring of 1930. Thirty-three years later, and seven years before tiger hunting would be banned in India, in another spring, in another land, more than a thousand kilometers away from the cool greens of the Shivaliks, a hunter was hot on the heels of a massive tiger that had been leaving 'tracks almost the size of soup plates'. Like the Bachelor, this giant, too, was no man-eater, though much like the Bachelor he, too, liked a few buffaloes every now and then. When the hunter, a maverick man named Syed Askari Hadi Ali Augustine Imam, finally saw the tiger for the first time, he described him as the size of 'a polo pony'. This tiger too met his end, almost in the exact manner as the Bachelor - a bullet to his head that went through his skull.

"The Kul (Tiger) has been gone for many years now. Pothiya (Leopards) are also no longer heard of. All the large wild animals that we once had in plenty disappeared over the years," says Lambu, one of the last of 'native Shikaris' - a term

used by British for the Adivasi trackers and hunters whose jungle-craft was the key to any hunt - waving his hand towards the forests at a distance as he warned his feet over the dying embers of a fire. It was in these forests around his village Jarwadih that Bachelor of Hazaribagh was shot at a place called 'Chunakhan'. Lambu, a Santhal Adivasi, was a permanent member of Tootoo's team of trackers and had been instrumental in bringing Bachelor to the gun. But that was then. In the decades that followed, the wilderness of Hazaribagh and Povalgarh that birthed the two Bachelors would traverse two vastly differing trajectories. The forests of Povalgarh, now an eponymously named conservation reserve, continue to reverberate with the roars of the tiger. Abutting the famous Corbett Tiger Reserve, they still harbor one of the highest densities of wild tigers in the entire world. Moreover, Povalgarh's forests are an integral part of Uttarakhand massive tiger landscape that spans across the Shivaliks of Dehradun district in the west to Nainital in the east, beyond which it merges seamlessly into Terai tiger landscape of Nepal and Uttar Pradesh. The home of Hazaribagh's Bachelor, however, withered away long ago. It has been decades since the tiger's roar fell silent not just across the forests of Hazaribagh, but the entire length and breadth of the Chota Nagpur plateau, of which Hazaribagh was an integral part. Tigers were practically wiped out across Hazaribagh's forests by the late 1980s,

and the last resident tiger of the forests of Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary disappeared in 1994. Poaching was the primary reason. The destruction of wildlife, however, didn't stop at tigers. Hazaribagh was once famed across Chhota Nagpur not only as the land of thousand tigers, but also as the stronghold of Sambar deer, the primary prey of the big cat. The abundance of prey-species in Hazaribagh allowed it to harbor a very healthy population and diversity of predators - leopards, large packs of wild dogs as well as wolves. However, within a decade of the tiger's disappearance, these forests had been emptied of all its Sambar deer, and the Cheetal deer were reduced to a few dozen animals. With them disappeared predators. With the forest department turning a blind eye, rampant bush-meat hunting wiped out nearly all medium and large mammalian fauna across Hazaribagh. It was a complete collapse of the food chain. Today, the 186.25 sq km Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary, once the beating heart of Hazaribagh's larger wilderness that spanned more than 3,000 sq km, is a classic example of the "empty forest syndrome" that afflicts nearly all of Jharkhand. Apart from wild boars, a rare barking deer, a few captive deer and Nilgai in an enclosure at Rajderwa - named so after the hunting lodge of the Raja of Ramgarh who once owned these forests - is all that the sanctuary has to show for its ungulate fauna. A few of these captive-bred Cheetal were released into the sanctuary in recent years but it

hasn't made any difference to the steady ecological decline of the forest.

However, while the roars of the tiger and sawing of the leopards might no longer echo through the forests of Hazaribagh, these forests have not been quiet. One can hear the massive crushers from the many stone quarries that persistently chip away at the edge of the forest right outside the sanctuary, leaving behind ugly barren craters in their wake. One can also pick up the drone of vehicles as they whiz through the newly-constructed four-lane expressway that cuts through the heart of the sanctuary. Elsewhere, in many of the district's forests, one can hear the distant blasts emanating from lands that were once cloaked with forests but are now hollowed out for the 'black gold' in their belly. Thousands of large Hyva trucks tar hinterland forest roads black with coal dust. The patch of forest which once pulsed with the call of the Bachelor of Hazaribagh in early 1960s now trembles with the ceaseless tremors of convoys of coal-laden Hyvas passing through it during the day and into the night. I remember the words of Francis Bradley Bradley-Birt, a British bureaucrat, who had described Hazaribagh thus more than a century ago - "This is the garden of Chhota Nagore, and that the motto over the old gateway of the Emperors at Delhi might well be written of Hazaribagh, 'If there is a paradise on earth, it is here, it is here.' No sooner had I remember it that a little voice suddenly whispered the words of a forester into my ears - 'It's all gone now, all gone.'

