

Burning Issue of Burning Amazon Rainforest- A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The paper is a presentation of the covering upon of all the prime issues-social, political, cultural or natural, which are responsible for the happening of the Amazon rainforest fires, which is very immediate and current issue. Not to be shocked, the event has caught all the eyeballs of the leaders as well as environmentalists in general. There has been a comparative study of the event on the basis of two national newspapers and one regional newspaper. The facts and figures remain the same, but the series of events which ultimately led to this horrifying incident differs in every paper. On the grounds of these varying events, the issue is a trial to be seen in the light of various angles. There can no one single valid point which can be established as the reason, but the equal or unequal contribution of these issues led to the flares of fire, which ultimately harmed the lungs of earth.

KEYWORDS: Amazon rainforest, fires, political, cultural, natural, varying, event, comparative

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INTRODUCTION

The global as well as sensational issue of the fires flared up in the Amazon rainforest which lasted comparatively longer than generally what is observed, has drew a throbbing attention from people across the globe. The issue has now been equivalently fire-some, just like the Amazon forest. There are various dimensions towards the capturing of focus which has contributed in the building upon of blocks, relating to the issue, leading to multiple-faceted conclusions and observations.

This comparative analysis is an attempt to dig out the important mixture of happenings, political and social acclaims as well as the role of climatic changes in the unfortunate, rather tumultuous and destructive event. With the help of the medium's like newspaper (in focus), paired up with digital social news, I have tried to bring upon surface the "surficial" as well as hidden facts on the same.

The Amazon Rainforest- located in Brazil, South America is spread in total area of 700 Million hectares, and is believed to be 'lungs of Earth', as 20% of the Earth's oxygen is produced here. It is home to 1 Million indigenous people, 3 Million plant and animal species and every 1/10 known species on Earth reside here in the rainforest. Known for its huge covering of the area, it spans across 8 rapidly developing countries; namely Brazil, Bolivia, Pweru, Ecauder, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana.

CONTENT:

The issue becomes significant one as what is called as the sink of the Earth, taking heat-trapping carbon-dioxide from the atmosphere, has been flared up in fires for quite a long time which affected approximately 640 Million acres of land. **Carlos Nobre**, Sao Paulo, climate scientist observed that if current rate of fires continue, than 20-25% by the forest would be destroyed, the dry region season would expand. This directly means, the area would no longer be a forest but a tropical savannah, or an area with grasslands and few trees.

The particular time period and the date of causing of the fire is not exactly known, but it is estimated that people got the information of such a bold fire after 21st August, 2019 and it was by the 23rd August that it spread rapidly among people through the media forces, grapevine communication and by the satellite images as provided by NASA taken from above the surface level of the Earth. It was not a sudden incident, but rather small fires which took a huge and terrifying form as time passed, because it only needs air to spread, just like the rumours relating to the incident. According to the news available by NASA, they were able to detect the fires even before 15th August, which shows how terrible form it was to take in the upcoming times.

Focusing upon the national and regional newspaper like the Times of India, The Indian Express as well as Sandesh,

hereby are the jotted points and the listing about the event, the causes and the consequences as well as the political affairs and the responses intertwined with the issue.

“Amazon Rainforest burning fast, Brazil’s president blames NGO’S”

As the headlines of the paper The Indian Express reads, it presents a picture of the ‘Amazon burnt by the loggers and farmers in Iranduba, Amazon’s state, Brazil’ in The World section of the article.

The analytical figures of the comparison of the fire in forest in 2018 with 2019 are presented, as stated by The National Institute for Space Research which monitors that it had detected 39,194 fires in 2019, which is a direct increase of 77% from the preceding year.

The blazes are so large and widespread that smoke has wafted thousands of miles away to the Atlantic Coast and Sao Paulo, the country’s most populous city, including other states also like Rondonia and Acre. According to their sources, on Wednesday, Brazil’s far-right president, Jair Bolsonaro, accused non-governmental organisations of setting the fire in the rainforest after the government pulled their funding, although he presented no evidence of the same. Further he added, government was working to control the blazes. Also, deforestation of the amazon has increased rapidly since Bolsonaro, who was appointed in October and took office in January and his government cut back on efforts to confront illegal activity in the rainforest.

There is a dual aspect seen here in this paper,

1. Of the official figures of fires and the areas damaged by it-

Regarding the figures and data, it is also one of the data that 2019 is not the worst year in the recent history. Brazil experienced more fire activity in the 2000’s –with 2005 seeing more than 1, 42, 000 fires in the first 8 months of the year. The other countries in the amazon basin, like Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru, etc. have also seen a high number of fires this year, upto an area spanning over 7.4 m sqkm. But it is particularly the North of Brazil that has been devastatingly affected.

2. The political stance against the Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro. Why is he criticized?

He has been on neglecting the global climate change fight, thus endangering the rainforest. He rolled into office in January 2019, with a number of promises, including restoring the country’s economy by finding other uses for amazon. Environmentalists and researchers blame Bolsanaro’s Pro-business leadership for emboldening farmers to cut away more amazon land for ranching. Further, he fired the head of the agency, INPE (National Institute for Space Research in Brazil) director Ricardo Galvao, which claims the research yielding the result of 88% increase in deforestation in the forest in the month of June, to be inaccurate and that it was hurting Brazil’s reputation.

The Editorial section of paper dated 23rd August, 2019, penned by Neha Banka becomes helpful in providing significant insight into the matter. It states why the man-made fires in the world’s largest rainforest brings in focus

President’s policies and what impact can it have on the environment? It is wholly put up in question-answer format, wherein the commonly discussed issues are ignored rather paid little importance, and add-on information is presented. Like how the fires start? It was due to local farmers, who had set fire in the BR-163 area of the forest, a highway that runs through the heart of the rainforest, for the sake of drawing the attention of government. It becomes a cause of concern as it disturbs the delicate rain balance cycle too, and amazon forest has the ability to produce at least half of the rain it receives.

One of the striking resemblances between the two-editorial and article, is that of environmental policies, former concerning with both past and current and the latter only with the contemporary. It brings to our knowledge that back than in 1965 the land available for farming was only up to 20%. Since 1960’s, Amazon forest has been constantly exploited because of cattle-ranching, logging, power-projects, mining and farming. The short-term economic interests take precedence over environmental concerns for Brazilian government.

In response to this, other countries have started to take notice, and environmental groups have not also shied away from firing back at Bolsonaro. But he has mostly resisted the criticism, and suggested that fires was merely the typical time of the year for ‘quemada’ (time when farmers usually clear land).

According to the Times of India,

“Macron sparks G7 fight over Amazon fires”

Emmanuel Macron, French president, said group of seven leaders gathering in France’s Biarritz must tackle the fires in the Amazon, establishing the Summit’s first flash point, which would be the topic of discussion. In response to Macron’s tweet-

“Our house is on fire. Literally. The Amazon, the lung of our planet, which produces 20% of our oxygen, is burning”; Bolsonaro responds with another tweet- “I regret that President Macron is seeking to use the internal matters of Brazil and other Amazon countries for political gain”.

The paper states the history for difference of opinions among 2 leaders, as in 1980’s; Francois Mitterrand provoked outrage in South America when he suggested Brazil’s rainforest was the heritage of all humans. Brazil’s concern about its sovereignty over the Amazon was a turning point in Environmental politics ahead of in 1992 Rio Environmental Summit. It also highlights the views of Canada’s justice Trudeau and Germany’s Angela Merkel, as opposed to Bolsonaro. UK PM Boris Johnson is also showing his concern about the international crisis and would use the G7 to call for a ‘renewed focus on protecting nature and tackling climate change’.

In addition to this , an another issue is presented stating that celebrities unwittingly spread misinformation on the issue, like Madonna, Leonardo Dicaprio and Emmanuel Macron, by circulating news and images that are years old or taken in other parts of the world. The photo used by the French leader showed that it was taken by the American photographer Loren McIntyre, who died in 2003, which

means image must be at least 16 years old. Dicaprio shared 2 pictures, one being similar to Macron and another shot in Peru in 2016. Cristiano Ronaldo shared a picture shot on March 29, 2018 by Lauro Alves, from the Brazilian agency RBS. And same goes with even Madonna.

The piece of writing in the TOI clearly presents much more than fires, but rather the flames of political history and environmental politics which are formed up between countries, especially France and Brazil. Also, the discussion regarding unfaithful role played by the celebrities and people who are influential is drawn attention to.

Due to the constant criticism of the president, the other policies of Brazil were also in danger, where Irish PM Leo Varadkar denied for free trade government as Brazil does not honour its environmental commitments. In their defence, Onyx Lorenzoni, the Brazilian president's chief of staff said, "There is deforestation in Brazil, yes; but bot at the rate that they say"

He had earlier accused European countries of exaggerating and wrongly glorifying environmental problems in Brazil to disrupt its commercial interest.

As a result of G7 meeting, a help of \$20 million had been offered to president Bolsonaro, which he lately accepted. Due to the threats imposed on him, he found it urging to curb the flaming issue and took steps to cool down the fire; two C-130 Hercules aircraft carrying thousands of litres of water began extinguishing fires devouring chunks of the world's largest rainforest. More than 43,000 troops have been made available to combat fires.

It was on Friday (27th August) that Bolsonaro changed his tune, and he vowed a 'zero tolerance' approach to the criminal activities in the forest and promised strong action to control the blaze. This directly lead to a question, that the fires in the forest were intentional or naturally?

According to Amazon Environmental Research Institute- 'The recent increase in the number of fires in the Amazon is directly related to international deforestation and not the result of an extremely dry season'

When the trees are cut or burned, the carbon- dioxide is released in the atmosphere as a result of which the capacity of rainforest to absorb carbon is reduced. The emission of 228 megatons' of carbon-dioxide took so far as in this year, which is highest since 2010, due to the fires. Forest fires are common in the Amazon during the dry season, which runs from July to October; they can be caused both by natural as well as man-made factors. But the fact cannot be denied that this year most fires are believed to have been started by farmers and loggers clearing the land for crops and grazing, as they cut the tress, leave the woods to dry and later put fire to it, so that the ashes can fertilise the soil.

In support to this argument, Doughlas Mortan, head of the Biospheric Sciences Laboratory at NASA'S Goddard Flight Centre says that "the timing and location of the fires were more consistent with land clearing than with regional drought".

As and according to regional newspaper Sandesh dated 23rd August, 2019-

"The lungs of Earth- Amazon forest in fires"

Along with the data of comparisons, the regions affected, the blame-game of Bolsonaro and Macron, a comparative detailed analysis of the parts of world with highest forest area is given, which is without doubt topped by Brazil, with an area of 56.10% out of total land area consisting of lush green forest. This establishes a point that why this 56% of land is important to the humanity, to the nature in general as well as equally beneficial to animals.

An environmental and purely concerning approach regarding the nature preservation has been echoed from the article, as it highlights the various facts about Amazon forest, how it is unique as well as one of the heritage to humanity, which has to be taken care off by humans.

The heart-wrenching pictures of animals who have been a victim of the inflammable flames are also discussed over as a crucial and important matter, which was not even paid a tinge of attention in another article/s.

Also, one significant information, not available elsewhere in previous newspapers, is of the mentioning of the reasons and major causes behind the blazes, which has been summed up as: Deforestation, cutting down protection of an area deemed crucial in combating climate change and the illegal mining activities carried out in the Amazon basin.

This comparative analysis marks a clear difference between the national and regional newspaper about looking at a particular issue. On one side where the national press agencies seemingly tasks upon to gather the political, cultural , historical politics issue ; on the other hand the regional newspaper buckles upon to rather dive in the causes of happening of the event, its consequences on the surface level and the destruction caused.

CONCLUSION:

Based on this, it can be summed up that there is certain information which is common, significant and evident in all 3 newspapers, for example: the data of increase in fire. But the digging out of the reasons and the ways of finding it out differs, as somewhere the political assaults and strategies are in fault. Whereas on the other hand the ground level environmental reasons are in the spotlight.

Though, certain facts regarding the issue cannot be denied, which are hard core realities, one of them being fire was not natural, also in direct or indirect way Bolsonaro and his anti-environmentalist strategies were also one of the cause of the failure of preservation of mother Earth. The fires may be extinguished, but the fire set among the hearts of people, especially preservators is yet burning sparklingly.

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