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BRAZIL'S ELECTION RESULTS AND HOPE FOR THE AMAZON

» 1. Carbon Storage

- The Amazon, the world's largest tropical rainforest, covers an area of approximately 7 million square kilometres. Scientist Carlos Nobre has estimated that these rainforests store a total of 150 billion tonnes of carbon.
- This is equivalent to approximately 10 years of global carbon emissions. By storing such large quantities of carbon, the Amazon helps prevent climate change from becoming more severe.
- Natural systems that absorb and store carbon are known as carbon sinks.
- The Amazon holds an important position among the world's largest carbon storage systems. Nearly half of the carbon stored in tropical forests is found in the Amazon.
- When the Amazon rainforest is damaged, the carbon stored in it can be released back into the atmosphere, intensifying climate change.
- Apart from carbon storage, the Amazon rainforest plays a major role in biodiversity conservation, rainfall patterns, and oxygen production. Indigenous communities living in the region also make significant contributions to forest conservation.
- Approximately 60% of the Amazon rainforest lies within Brazil's borders. Therefore, the laws and decisions of the Brazilian government directly affect the Amazon.
- During the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro from 2019 to 2022, large areas of the Amazon rainforest were destroyed.
- Financial support for Brazil's major environmental protection agency was also reduced.
- Bolsonaro also dismissed the head of an agency responsible for monitoring deforestation following disagreements over research findings concerning forest destruction.
- Bolsonaro permitted activities such as mineral mining, logging, and cattle grazing in several parts of the Amazon rainforest.
- Many environmental activists accused Bolsonaro of viewing environmental protection merely as an obstacle to economic development.

» 2. A Significant Achievement

- After assuming office as President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, commonly known as Lula, introduced various environmental protection measures.

- During his administration, annual deforestation in the Amazon declined by 71%.
- He established a separate ministry for the protection of Indigenous peoples. This gave Indigenous communities greater authority to participate in important decisions concerning the forest regions where they live.
- Carbon emissions also declined during his administration.
- Experts strongly emphasise that Lula's achievements in Brazil are highly significant for both global environmental politics and international efforts to combat climate change.
- Brazil's initiatives also provide international support and encouragement for forest conservation efforts in countries with extensive rainforests, such as Indonesia and Congo.
- If Brazil uses its global importance to establish a sustainable forest financing mechanism, it could benefit developing countries worldwide.

» 3. A Ray of Hope

- The protection of the Amazon rainforest was discussed at the climate summit held in Brazil last year.
- If Lula continues as President, these discussions are expected to receive renewed attention, and related conservation efforts are likely to continue.
- In particular, preventing deforestation in the Amazon would help protect its carbon storage capacity and maintain its role in regulating the global climate.
- Brazil has received a historic opportunity to prevent the Amazon rainforest from reaching a point of irreversible destruction, says rainforest researcher Carlos Nobre.
- Climate researcher David Lapola remarks that "The Amazon can now breathe a sigh of relief."
- Early signs of hope have already begun to emerge.
- In 2025, Brazil introduced a fund for the permanent protection of tropical forests.
- With Lula securing another electoral victory, there is an opportunity for this initiative to continue operating.
- Following the election results, the Netherlands government announced that it would contribute US$500 million to the fund.
- Experts believe that this decision was not accidental. They suggest that the Netherlands came forward to contribute because Lula's re-election strengthened confidence that the fund would continue functioning.
- However, Lula has also faced criticism regarding certain aspects of his environmental policies.
- Although deforestation has declined, Brazil's oil and natural gas production and consumption have not yet decreased significantly.
- Climate experts therefore recommend that Brazil should strengthen its contributions to climate action beyond preventing deforestation.
- They hope that such contradictory policies will be avoided during the present administration.

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