

Welcome Address by Shri V S Sampath, Election Commissioner, on 2nd National Voters' Day (25th January, 2012) at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi

Hon'ble Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalamji, Chief Election Commissioner Dr. S.Y. Quraishi, Election Commissioner Sh. H.S. Brahma, Distinguished Guests, representatives of the Political Parties, Excellencies, Award Winning Officers, Young Electors from Delhi, Officers and Staff of the Election Commission of India, Ladies and Gentlemen!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the second National Voters' Day celebrations at the national level, in this Plenary Hall of Vigyan Bhawan, which has been witness to many a historic event in the post-independence era. First and foremost, I extend a warm welcome to our former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, who kindly accepted our invitation to be the Chief Guest on this occasion. He postponed his visit to attend programme of a Public Sector Unit, which he had committed earlier, to be present amidst us today. This shows his deep attachment to the Election Commission of India and strong commitment to the cause of the National Voters' Day. Dr Kalam has been intimately associated with our efforts at strengthening the democratic electoral process by empowering the people of the country, especially the youth, through exercise of their voting rights. It is therefore most befitting that our national brand ambassador is presiding over this very meaningful occasion. We are, indeed, grateful to you, Sir.

I also welcome the Heads of the political parties and their representatives, who are the most important stakeholders in our democratic set-up. Indian democracy is a torch-bearer in the world today, where we have the largest electorate and also a large number of National and **State** political parties **following** different ideologies. The Commission has always considered the political parties and their willing adherence to the country's electoral system and discipline as a source of strength. We also have a good presence of the other stake-holders like the newly registered voters from different parts of Delhi, who would receive their Elector Photo Identity Cards and a badge from the Chief Guest. They represent millions of others who are similarly being felicitated across eight and a half lakh polling stations in the country. Diplomats from various countries, representatives from national and international organizations working in the area of democracy and elections are here as part of our joint commitment to improve election management and democratic practices through exchange of good practices. Officers from Government of India's Ministries and Departments and other distinguished guests represent the collaborative nature of our election management.

The National Voters' Day is now the flagship programme of the Election Commission of India. It is so not only in terms of the large-scale empowerment of citizens, especially the youth, by giving them their Voter identity cards and bringing them into the electoral fraternity, but also on this day, country-wide activities are

undertaken for spreading voter education and awareness. As we have gathered here today, millions others across the country are also involved in National Voters' Day activities: men and women, boys and girls, the young **and** the old, the educated and the illiterate, the rich and the poor, the urban and the rural and those in remotest areas. Other than the national elections, this is **one of** the largest mobilization and involvement of people in any democracy related exercise, which has no parallel in the entire world.

When we launched the National Voters' Day exactly one year ago, on this very day, we had given away Voter identity cards to 5 newly eligible and registered voters from the Rashtrapati Bhawan Polling Station area, as the Hon'ble President of India was the Chief Guest on that occasion. This year, I am very happy to announce that we will give the Voter I-cards to 20 young electors who have been recently enrolled in the Electoral Rolls. These youngsters belong to different Assembly Constituencies and Polling Station areas of Delhi and they represent the depth and firmness of the democratic roots which have got entrenched in our soil over the last more than 6 decades.

These 20 young electors would come on stage to receive their Voter I-cards, a badge which reads "**Proud to be a Voter - Ready to Vote**" and then they would join us all in taking the National Voters' day Pledge, which would be administered by our Hon'ble Chief Guest Dr. Kalam. I would request all of you to rise from your seats and take the Pledge, when it is read out by the Chief Guest in a few minutes from now. You would be committing yourself to participate in the electoral process without any discrimination, and by that act of yours, will be reaffirming your faith in our democracy.

I once again welcome you all to the second National Voters' Day.

Thank You!