

Editorial

AFSPA in the House

Once an editor of a popular Imphal based daily newspaper - 'Naharolgee Thoudang' - a newspaper dedicated to the cause of Human Rights- as written as its slogan; a once upon a time fearless journalist ready to take up any atrocities committed by the SF under the shadow of the draconian Act Armed Forces Special Powers' Act (AFSPA); a journalist who spent time in jail for the cause of Manipur and now the Chief Minister of Manipur - Nongthombam Biren Singh had simplified the debate on whether the controversial AFSPA should be lifted or not. During the private member resolution moved by opposition MLA Joykishan, Chief Minister N. Biren Singh said that the Disturbed Area Status declared by the state government- a precondition on which AFSPA can be enforced- can be lifted any time by the state government if the law and order situation improves.

Differences in ideology over some issues had separated him from the Congress; but if one recalled it was N. Biren Singh, K Ranjit and some other Congress MLAs of the time, when Okram Ibobi Singh was the Chief Minister, that they threatened resignation if AFSPA has not been lifted at least from the seven Assembly Segments of greater Imphal area. The threat by those MLAs including the present Chief Minister is one reason that the Disturb Area tag has been removed and AFSPA automatically could not be implied. As per provisions of the AFSPA, it is the state cabinet that can make the decision on whether the act is still required or not.

So Chief Minister N. Biren had rightly pointed out the necessity of the state government to first review the matter and make decisions on what or what not to do.

Nagaland government had once lifted AFSPA from the state but was re-imposed. As per the powers conferred by Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (No. 28 of 1958) the Central Government has the power to declare a State to be a 'Disturbed Area'.

In case of Tripura it was different; the center welcomed the government's decision to lift AFSPA saying there was no need for the state government to take the consent of the central government while taking the move.

The case of Jammu and Kashmir is different and as of now, we are more concerned with our state Manipur.

The three months old N Biren Singh government will surely review the law and order situation as the declaration of the Disturbed Area Status has to be reviewed every six months. Most of the time, Home Ministers of the state government have been presenting their report saying that the law and order has improved. And definitely if it is so, the state cabinet will surely think on the matter and surely lift the disturb area status from more assembly segments. Hope the present government shows some difference from the previous government and stand up to deliver the aspirations of the people.

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National and International News

Gujarat Congress leaders join BJP: Many politicians have moved to the saffron party since 2014

Courtesy FP Surat, July 29: With the exception of Navjot Singh Sidhu, many other politicians seem to be siding with the dominant political tide in the country. Since 2014, a number of leaders have decided to join the BJP and leave their own parties, which are at the losing side of the political battle.

The 'Modi wave' which was thought to have captured most Indians since the 2014 general election, has also arrested the attention of other parties' MLAs. They seem to want to share a slice of the winning pie by associating with the saffron party's mega plan of coming to power across the country. However, not all defectors have helped the BJP in bringing an electoral windfall. Nevertheless, they have all added to the demoralisation in their respective parties. It is seen as a symbolic defeat of others and a major (again, symbolic) victory by the BJP.

The recent incident in a spree of defections to the BJP were three Congress MLAs in Gujarat. On Thursday, Congress chief whip and MLA from Siddhpur Balwantsinh Rajput, Tejashree Patel from Virangam, and Vijapur legislator PI Patel submitted their resignations. Within minutes of their joining the BJP, Rajput was named the saffron party's third Rajya Sabha candidate. BJP chief Amit Shah and Union minister Smriti Irani are the other two candidates fielded by the party.

While it is yet to be seen if Rajput wins the Rajya Sabha seat for the BJP, the switch has certainly sent Congress into flutters. The

petrified Congress has flown over 40 of its MLAs to Bengaluru to prevent them from being "poached" by the BJP.

Just days before this, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar abandoned the Grand Alliance, which he had formed to defeat the "communal" BJP, to join the saffron party yet again.

It could have been because of a fear of being left out with the rising popularity of the BJP or differences with alliance partner and RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav, or both. However, with Nitish embracing the NDA again, the BJP has another state in its kitty and Nitish got to keep his post of the chief minister of Bihar. The other high-profile defection, which warranted a press conference, was that of former Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Rita Bahuguna Joshi.

Months before the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election, Joshi, who after unsuccessfully contesting parliamentary elections twice managed to win only an MLA seat from Lucknow cantonment, announced her decision to join the BJP in a press conference with BJP chief Amit Shah.

While her exit from the Congress wasn't thought to have either gained the BJP significantly or hurt the already low prospects of the Congress, it was only a disadvantage to the Grand Old Party on a psychological level, according to *The Wire*. However by siding with the BJP, Joshi outdid herself in the 2017 Assembly election and defeated Samajwadi Party's Aparna Yadav. She is now a minister in Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's cabinet.

Movement to demand Bodoland intensified

NENA Guwahati, July 29: With the continuous movement strategy seeking statehood, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), National Democratic Front of Boroland-Progressive (NDFB-P) and Peoples Joint Action Committee for Boroland Movement (PJACBM) staged a three-hour grand mass dharna seeking early creation of Bodoland under Article 2 & 3 of Indian constitution, ensure constitutional safeguard for protection of the land and political rights of the Bodo people living outside the proposed Bodoland, grant ST (Hills) to the Bodo people living in Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao.

In Kokrajhar, near DC office over 8000 employees of Bodos, youth activists and supporters of Bodoland participated with banner, placards in the mass dharna on Friday that was started from 11 am and continued till 2 pm. The agitators shouted slogans like 'divide Assam 50/50, No Bodoland no rest, we want Bodoland, we want justice, this land is our land' seeking early solution of long standing demand of Bodoland state.

The ABSU and its allied movement NDFB-P and PJACBM have been organizing continuous movement to put pressure government for solving the Bodoland issue through political dialogue in immediate manner.

This time, the movement groups carried out the agitation with the nomenclature of employees' dharna, involving all sections of employees of the Bodos in support of Bodoland demand. On July 15, the movement groups had organized farmers' dharna in Guwahati in support of Bodoland which created attractions in the movement spirit.

The ABSU, NDFB-P and PJACBM have urged the government of India to take bold initiative while solving Bodoland issue through political dialogue, warning that the government would be faced vigorous mass movement in coming days. A memorandum signed by employees was submitted to Rajnath Singh, Union Home Minister through Deputy Commissioner, Kokrajhar seeking early creation of Bodoland state and constitutional safeguard for protection of the land and political rights of the Bodo people living outside the proposed Bodoland.

Assam Rifles conducts health and hygiene lecture

Imphal, July 29 (NENA): The 26 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) conducted a Medical Camp cum lecture on health and hygiene for local populace at border village of Goujyang in Moreh Sub Division of Tengnoupur district on July 27.

The programme was conducted by medical officers of the Unit. Free medical checkup and medicines

were provided to villagers, a press release from PRO of IGAR (S) said. A total of 62 persons including 30 children benefited from this noble initiative. Apart from providing medical assistance, basic health education including precautions against common diseases like malaria, dengue was imparted and the importance of hygiene and sanitation was explained to the villagers.

Before Joshi, former Bahujan Samajwadi Party leader Swami Prasad Maurya had also joined the BJP in Uttar Pradesh. Maurya, Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly before he quit the BSP, joined the BJP in the presence of party president Amit Shah at the BJP headquarters. He even won the Padrauna seat with 93,649 votes. After him, Brajesh Pathak, a senior BSP leader and a prominent Brahmin face in the party also decided to join the BJP.

After winning Uttar Pradesh, the BJP started looking south, where its presence is still scant. In preparation for Karnataka polls, the BJP inducted former Karnataka chief minister SM Krishna in March 2017. Of all the southern states, the BJP is closest to power in Karnataka. It is now trying to improve its strength with the induction of leaders from other parties, according to *NDTV*.

The departure of a leader as experienced as Krishna would have also wreaked damage on the Congress, but in a subtle psychological way rather than in direct electoral terms. The BJP is expected to benefit from Krishna's knowledge of the Congress.

After Krishna, former MP M Shivanna also decided to quit Congress and join the BJP. Shivanna decided to join the BJP, along with his supporters, citing unhappiness with the Congress leadership.

While, BJP's model of poaching leaders of other parties has worked well for Uttar Pradesh, it possibly started with Assam.

Former health and education minister and a close confidant of former chief minister Tarun gogoi, Himanta Biswa Sarma joined the BJP in 2015. Sarma's joining the BJP sent shivers through the rank and file of the ruling Congress party.

Sarma became the convener of BJP's Election Management Committee for the 2016 Assembly elections in Assam. He is the face of the party for the entire North East and the convener of the North East Democratic Alliance, the BJP-led alliance of non-Congress parties of the North East. He is also known as the party's chief Machiavelli there.

Another prominent entrant has been V Srinivasa Prasad, a Dalit leader from Mysuru, who was dumped by Siddaramaiah from his ministry. This move was also seen as a jolt to the ruling Congress in the state.

Prasad was BJP's candidate for the Nanjangud by polls. However, after losing the election, he announced his retirement from electoral politics.

The BJP also came to power earlier this year without contesting any election after chief minister Pema Khandu decided to switch loyalties. He shifted to the BJP with 33 legislators. It was an easy win for the BJP, who had supported Khandu after the Peoples' Party of Arunachal temporarily suspended him, his deputy Chowna Mein, and five MLAs for alleged anti-party activities.

Apart from these legislators, who have benefitted the saffron party in one way or the other, there are reports of others joining the BJP soon.

There are speculations that Congress man Narayan Rane may cross over to the BJP after he met Maharashtra Tourism Minister and BJP MLA Jaykumar Rawal.

While Shankersinh Vaghela announced his decision to quit the Congress, he also announced that he doesn't plan on joining any other political party. However, there are speculations that Amit Shah was the mastermind behind his grand exit.

Two SP, one BSP MLCs resign from UP Legislative Council

UP, July 29: In a jolt to Samajwadi party two of its MLCs Bukkal Nawab and Yashwant Singh today tendered their resignation from the Legislative Council amid possibilities of joining BJP in the state.

One BSP MLC Jay Veer Singh also resigned from his membership of Upper house.

Our correspondent reports that one more MLC Madhukar Jaiteley is also

likely to resign. SP MLC and Rashtriya Shia Samaj founder Bukkal Nawab praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Meanwhile, BJP national president Amit Shah reached Lucknow for two-day visit.

Our correspondent reports that all these are likely to join BJP in the presence of Amit Shah.

Bihar cabinet to be expanded

Patna, July 29: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar will extend his cabinet today and oath ceremony will take place at this evening at Raj Bhavan, Patna. Sources said that a formula for the new government has been planned as 19 legislators from JD(U) and 16 from NDA will be inducted in the new cabinet. Besides BJP, Lok Janshakti Party, LJP, and Rashtriya Lok Samta

Party, RLSP, will also be part of the government.

Meanwhile, Hindustani Awam Morcha, HAM, President Jitan Ram Manjhi said he will not be part of the cabinet. Mr. Manjhi is the lone member from his party in the assembly.

HAM has extended support to Nitish government during the trust vote in the assembly yesterday.

CAG finds deficiencies in defence pension system

New Delhi, July 29: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has found glaring deficiencies in the defence pension system, including incomplete accounting of expenditure, and flaws in the authorisation process.

In a report tabled in the Lok Sabha, the CAG said an amount of 6,831 crore rupees was lying in banks at the end of March last year, due to

procedural lapses. The report said, substantial amount of expenditure was not booked to the pension head and was lying under RBI suspense head because of the inability of the banks to furnish the pension payment scrolls.

The defence pension is disbursed to over 25 lakh pensioners, involving an expenditure of over 60,000 crore rupees every year.