

Editorial

Thursday, February 6, 2019

NE voice on CAB: no worry for the BJP

The anti-BJP wave sweeping across the North Eastern states of India seems to give no worry to the BJP. May the BJP leadership under estimated the region even as they have tried when Narendra Modi wave hurled the country in 2014 parliamentary election. Their victory in 2014 had made them so confident that as long as the majority Hindu in the heartland of India can be hypnotized, the BJP is in no way going to lose the election. Of the 29 states, the BJP now seem to concentrate the issues of bigger states which have more number of MPs either in way of hypnotizing the less literate voters or by building unbreakable alliance with political parties so that the number of reinstating a similar BJP led NDA type government could be formed at the center. To be precise, targeting big states which have more numbers of MPs is becoming the agenda of BJP in their effort to bring back Narendra Damodur Modi as the country's Prime Minister again.

Promises to scrape inhuman and outdated legislation or Act are a mere joke. If one remember what the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi had spoken at Madison Square Garden in New York at which he stated that draconian and outdated laws will be scraped, he or she will certainly think that, "Mr. Modi did know how to make joke". The speech was delivered around 4 years back and till today the draconian Armed Forces Special Power Act is still enforced, the sedition laws make no changes and provisions to protect citizen from detention in the name of potential threat still continue in the name National Security Act (NSA) where a Manipuri Television Journalist Kishorechandra Wangkhem has been detained after court set him free.

The ambitious Act East Policy which was renamed after the coming of the Modi government turn out to be another appeasement policy of the North Eastern states. NRC in Assam was supported and after knowing that over 40 lakhs illegal immigrants has been found out, the Government led by Narendra Modi is amending the citizenship act to grant citizen to these people perhaps.

The day when the Contentious Citizen Amendment Bill, 2016 was passed in the Lok Sabha, there was wild uproar in the entire states of North East. In Tripura protestors were fired.

The Chief Minister of Manipur, perhaps under pressure at least joint hands with some political party urged the Union Home Minister and the prime Minister to insert a clause that would protect the state from CAB, which is neither feasible nor listen by the BJP leadership.

Ram Madhav, the General Secretary in Charge of NE states for the BJP and present MP had stated that they are going to present the CAB 2016 and will pass in the Rajya Sabha too. The very statement of the BJP leader without saying anything to the demand of a BJP Chief Minister showed that they care nothing to NE states. After all the states put together including Sikkim have only 25 MPs. The issue of CAB and the uproar from the people of the state is not an issue as the BJP now shrewdly penetrated to West Bengal which have 42 MPs. Half of this number which the BJP is expecting to get due to the anti-incumbency factor of the Mamata Banerji Government as well as the number of illegal migrants which had already entered the city of joy who felt that they will be granted Indian citizenship. It is not an issue for Muslim migrant to convert it to any religion as most entered the country for survival. After all the CAB says persons without any document can also be granted citizenship of the country. There are no marks to any human being to show that he or she belong to any religion.

As per news report appeared at some of the Assam based newspapers, bold statement of Ram Madhav which humiliated the uproar of the public against the Bill showed that NE states is not important to them.

CAB, Political Parties and Manipur

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Manipur had become a constitutional monarchy in 1947 with voting rights for all adults. The first legislative assembly election in Manipur happened in 1948. No political party had an absolute majority. Therefore, an alliance of Praja Samiti, Krishak Sangha and independent members from the hills formed the government. Manipur State Congress, the precursor of the Indian National Congress, which was actively involved in pro-integration activities during this period, did not come to power. Two factions inside Manipur State Congress, Tomal and Tompok faction, worked vehemently for integration, including satyagraha against the dishonouring of Indian National Flag and the Gandhi cap. Tompok faction's first session in 1947 happened at Atom Babu Sharma's residence, a known historian of Manipur. Atom Babu Sharma's narrative on Manipur is not far from BJP's narrative on Manipur and North East. His scholarship has been rejected now in academia. His writings forcefully integrate indigenous puwari-s of Manipur with Hindu mythologies to present a Brahmanical history of Manipur. Recently, CM Nongthombam Biren brought Rukmini and Krishna myth to talk

about the relationship between the region and mainland India in Madhavpur fair. The Hinduisation movement which began in the North East centuries ago has continued through different actors, including Congress and BJP now. Therefore, it is a myth that BJP is an ideological challenge to Congress in matters of Manipur.

The regional parties from Manipur cannot get any space in the national politics given the structure with which parliamentary politics functions. The parliamentary parties in Manipur, with their limitations under the Indian state machinery, has failed to deliver anything on matters of historic importance for the people, whether it be AFSPA or ILP. Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) 2016 issue expresses the same limitations of the parliamentary parties. Lok Sabha passed the CAB 2016 despite loud protests from the northeastern states. The opposition did not want to look bad in front of Hindu mainland Indian voters by opposing the communal bill in Lok Sabha just before the 2019 national elections. And, everyone knew that BJP would pass the bill as it is in the majority in the lower house. Now, we are waiting for what will happen in Rajya Sabha. If the bill is

passed, BJP will gain more hold in Bengal. BJP has long alleged that Mamata Banerjee's politics is appeasement of Muslims. The Muslim population is quite large in West Bengal, around 27 per cent. With this bill, BJP wants to become the saviour of Hindu Bengalis of Bangladesh to gain more votes in West Bengal and Barak Valley. It serves to cut Mamata Banerjee's support base among Bengali Hindus. Also, Banerjee got to play hero in the NRC row. BJP wants to do the same with CAB. Furthermore, it would not mind losing 25 seats in the North East when it could gain substantive numbers in West Bengal which has 42 seats. When BJP looks at Barak Valley and West Bengal, they do not see tiny Manipur. The bill is going to please the mainland Indian Hindu voters also. Even if the bill fails, BJP still gains as Congress will get the blame. These matters are quite probable.

BJP and Congress must have calculated benefits of the bill in short and long term both. Whether BJP comes to power this time or not, the bill is going to benefit them in the long run as the demography is expected to change in favour of the mayang-s. The Congress has benefited from settling in migrants

from Bangladesh earlier, according to BJP. The regional parties with the indigenous population as their support base would suffer from the demographic change. However, the matter is far more serious than who comes to power in parliamentary elections. It is much more serious than Congress vs BJP vs regional parties trying to have a piece of the ruined pie. The passing of such a bill in Lok Sabha went without the consent of the indigenous people. The role of MPs from Manipur and other northeastern states in this matter have been condemnable. However, Manipur has only two representatives in the lower house. CAB 2016 row reveals that the indigenous people of North East have not been effectively represented in this parliamentary democracy. The matter, though, is more than politics of representation. The Indian democratic state with its repressive measures, AFSPA, UAPA, Sedition laws and NSA, rules the indigenous people of Manipur who are at the same time facing a demographic assault from the mayang-s coming from the west. It is unlikely that the regional parties and the units of national parties in Manipur can achieve anything for the indigenous people on this matter.

Intl. and Natl. News

Parliament Budget Session LIVE: Lok Sabha adjourned for the day, Rajya Sabha till 2 pm

Agency
New Delhi Feb 6,

Parliament Budget Session LIVE: Soon after it reconvened on the fifth day of the budget session Wednesday, the Rajya Sabha was adjourned till 2 pm after opposition uproar over various issues including Citizenship (Amendment) Bill. The House reconvened a day after protests by TMC members and other Opposition parties over CBI's attempt to question Kolkata police chief Rajeev Kumar in chit fund disrupted proceedings for the second straight day. The Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day after paying homage to the sitting BJD MP Ladu Kishore Swain who passed away late last night. He was 71.

The Rajya Sabha was adjourned for the day yesterday amid heavy sloganeering and ruckus. In the Lok Sabha yesterday, Finance Minister

Piyush Goyal presented a statement showing the Supplementary Demands for Grants, 2018-19. He sought Parliament's nod for gross additional expenditure of Rs 1,98,831.36 crore during the current fiscal ending March. The lower House also witnessed sloganeering due to forcing Speaker Sumitra Mahajan to adjourn it twice.

With the Supreme Court passing an order Tuesday to the effect that no coercive action including arrest can be initiated against Kumar and asking him to appear before CBI for questioning, both Houses are expected to function smoothly.

Targeting the TMC, BJP's Nishikant Dubey alleged that the West Bengal government under the TMC is protecting illegal migrants from Bangladesh, which has changed the demography in several places, including some districts of Jharkhand, from where he is an MP.

Mizoram BJP to be dissolved if Citizenship Bill not revoked: State unit chief

Agency
Aizawl, Feb 6,

Mizoram BJP chief John V Hluna on February 5 threatened to dissolve the party's state unit if the national leadership goes ahead with the passage of the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, "harming the interests of northeast people". He stressed that people of Mizoram and their safety were of "primary importance".

"The BJP state unit was formed to safeguard the interests of the people of Mizoram. If the central leadership decides to legislate the proposed amendment, the state unit would have no option but to dissolve itself," Hluna told reporters here.

He said he had approached Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and other national leaders over the controversial bill and appealed to the party's central leadership to revoke

it. He added that as an alternative, the state BJP unit also requested the national leaders that the bill, if not revoked, should at least keep the northeastern states out of its purview. "We would be left with no choice but to dissolve the BJP state unit if our appeals are not taken into consideration," Hluna said. The churches in the Christian-majority state have been asked to organise a mass prayer for the bill's defeat in Parliament, he said.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha on January 8. It seeks to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslims from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan after six years of residence in India instead of 12, which is the norm currently, even if they do not possess any document.

Protests against the bill have rocked the entire northeast, including the Mizo National Front-ruled Mizoram.

Citizenship Amendment Bill likely to be placed in Rajya Sabha on February 12

Agency
New Delhi Feb 6,

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 is likely to be placed by Modi government for debate and passage on February 12 in the Rajya Sabha as per government sources.

Seeking support from two major parties namely the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the NDA government is resilient with plans to bring the Bill after it opened negotiations.

The NDA floor managers have so far managed to seek support from several smaller regional parties and are confident enough to sail through in the Rajya Sabha.

While talking to Assam Tribune a nominated MP said that plans have been firm up to bring the Bill for debate and passage on February 12 and they have been sounded out to be present on that day. But the MP said that he has requested BJP's top

leadership not push hard but to find some sort of compromise formula to ensure that the North-East remains peaceful. "They are listening, but I can't say what is in their mind," he remarked.

A senior BJP MP from Assam also confirmed the development and said that his Party has managed the numbers and is going to get the Bill passed in Rajya Sabha.

As reported, the NDA has secured the support of BJD (9), AIADMK (13), TRS (6) and nominated (4) in favour of the CAB. The SP has 13 MPs and BSP (4).

Sources said that the Congress Party last night had sent feelers to both the regional parties to oppose the Bill but are yet to receive response from SP and BSP.

On Monday, the BJP general secretary in-charge of North-East Ram Madhav in Guwahati said that CAB will be placed in Rajya Sabha for approval as supplementary Bill as

talks are on with aggrieved parties to find a middle ground which will satisfy all.

"Home Ministry is talking to all the stakeholders and we are hopeful that a middle ground will be found soon, which will pave the way for passing of the Bill in upper house," Madhav was quoted as having told a news agency.

Meanwhile, Congress MP Bhubaneswar Kalita said that the Rajya Sabha may witness a spill-over of business as it could not transact any business during the last two days. Rajya Sabha may discuss President's address on Wednesday and Thursday and with Friday being reserved for Private Member's Bill, the discussion on the Budget will be pushed to next Monday and Tuesday. As a result only one day will be left for passage of six Bills, he informed.

The government, however, has the option to extend the House but it has

to first take the sense of the House, he added.

Meanwhile, Advisor of the All Assam Students Union (AASU), Samujjal Bhattacharya reacting to the developments said that they are continuing the exercise of meeting leaders of various political parties. "We have told them it is their responsibility to save the North-East and Assam," he said.

The Advisor said, "It is the duty of all political parties to save the Assam Accord and ensure its implementation and they should protect Assam and North-East. He appealed to all political parties not to abstain but should be present in the House to ensure that the Bill is not passed."

Bhattacharya said that they will continue their agitation and if the Bill is passed they will turn it into a vigorous movement.

The Advisor also warned that they will not be responsible for if the situation deteriorates after this.

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