

Editorial

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BJP shows no concern for NE states

Inability to make a united stand among civil society groups, political parties and the students' bodies is again becoming a stumbling block to the ongoing agitation against contentious Citizenship Amendment Bill which is on its way to pass at Rajya Sabha.

All are against the Bill as it is about our land and people. Various form of agitations organised by various organizations are also against the passing of the Bill. But what will make the peoples' movement 'fail' is the disunity among the various group either it may be the political parties, civil society bodies, students' body or the meira paibis.

As of now, two apex bodies - one MANPAC another PAM is spearheading movement against the contentious CAB. Political parties too have group themselves as M DF and SDF. May be some differences of strategy on how to move on the agitations and oppose the Bill may be different, but the goal of all the agitating body are similar.

Yesterday saw PAM clarifying over a doctored video which went viral. As per their statement there are some people who are trying to confuse the agitation by drawing line on communal line. There may come another time that such plan to sabotage the peoples' movement may come again using the similar techniques. And one thing the people of the state should understand is that as long as there is not unity among the various group it will give chances to those people who are in favour of the CAB in sabotaging the peoples' movement.

Interesting development is the state BJP's open declaration of opposing the Bill by leading a joint alliance of MDF. The Congress already made its stand and they had tie and again oppose the Bill and the 9 political parties under the banner SDF are on their way pushing their respective MPs to stop the CAB 2016 from passing in the Rajya Sabha.

Meanwhile, Ram Madhav, the North East in Charge General secretary of the BJP is very confident of getting passage of the Bill in the Rajya Sabha that he openly declared that the Bill will be presented as Supplementary in the Rajya Sabha.

It is on record that 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.

It is at this point that one need to ponder on why the BJP NE secretary told media about the things that has already burnt the NE. The very word of Ram Madhav is nothing but pouring of the fuel to the fire.

It may be remembered that 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.

11th Manipur Assembly Elections 2017: Issues, Manifestos and Outcome

By Aheibam Koireng Singh.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) announced the dates for the 11th Manipur Assembly Elections (MAE) 2017 to be held in phases on Wednesday, 4th January 2017. Accordingly the 11th Manipur Assembly Elections (MAE) 2017 was held in two phases correspondingly on 4th and 8th March 2017 under tight security. Repolls for both the phases were also later held based on reports and complaints of the voting process getting interrupted due to technical snags and other malpractices during elections. For the first time, two polling stations of Ukhrul AC were exclusively manned by women officials. The overall voter turnout for the state elections had been recorded at 86.61 Per Cent (PC). A total of 23 underground outfits of Manipur, consisting two conglomerates - the UPF and KNO are currently under Suspension of Operation (SoO) agreement with the Union Government. Three valley-based underground outfits of Manipur - the URF, KCP-L and KYKL-MDF too have signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Union Government. The Chief Electoral Officer, ahead of the election, announced on 2nd March that altogether 2,228 underground cadres belonging to various militant groups who are under SoO and MoU with the Government of India (GoI) would cast their votes through postal ballot at 14 designated camps across the State.

First Phase Election:
The five districts going to poll in the first phase MAE 2017 to decide the fate of 168 candidates in the fray including seven female candidates were Bishnupur, Churachandpur, Imphal East, Imphal West, and Senapati. The total number of electorates for the first phase was 19,02,562 comprising 9,28,573 males and 9,73,989 females. Out of the total 1,643 polling stations, the ECI had identified 837 polling stations as "hyper sensitive" and 529 as "sensitive". For maintaining peaceful polling 280 companies of Central Paramilitary forces and armed police of other states have been deployed. In addition to it, 9338 state police personnel were also deployed. 8404 polling personnels were also appointed to conduct the elections. More than 61.05 percent of licensed arms were also deposited to police custody before the Election in order to conduct peaceful and trouble-free elections.

Manipur Election Watch (MEW) and 'Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)' did an analysis of the financial details, criminal background, age and educational profile of the candidates in the fray for the 11th MAE 2017 on the basis of the self-sworn affidavits submitted in filing the nomination for candidature. ADR was established by a group of professors from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad with a goal to improve governance and strengthen democracy by continuous work in the area of electoral and political reforms. It conducts multiple projects aimed at increasing transparency and accountability in the political and electoral system of the country. According to their analysis, of all the 167 candidates from 17 political parties, including six National parties, five State parties, six unrecognised parties and 14 independents who were contesting in the first phase, 54 are Crorepatis. It includes 21 out of 37 from Indian National Congress (INC), 21 out of 38 from Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), five out of 12 from National Peoples Party (NPP), two out of eight from North East India Development Party and two out of six from Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). The average assets per candidate contesting in the first phase of Manipur polls was Rs 1.04 Crore. Among major parties, the average assets per candidate for

37 INC candidates was Rs 1.73 Crore, 38 BJP candidates (Rs 1.49 Crore), 12 National Peoples Party candidates (Rs 1.06 Crore), 10 All India Trinamool Congress candidates (Rs 32.74 lakh), six NCP candidates (Rs 58.74 lakh) and 14 Independent candidates (Rs 26.36 lakh). The analysis further said, there were three candidates who have declared serious criminal cases, including cases related to attempt to murder, cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property etc. Four out of 38 candidates from BJP, two out of 37 candidates from INC, one out of 10 candidates from Manipur National Democratic Front (MNDF) and one out of six candidates from NCP were also found to have declared criminal cases against them. A total of 72 candidates have declared their age to be between 25 and 50 years, while 95 between 51 and 80 years. On the education details of candidates, 38 have declared their qualification to be between primary and intermediate, while 124 have declared having a qualification of graduate or above and one candidate as illiterate.

Second Phase Election:
The election for the second phase of the MAE 2017 was held for 1151 polling stations spreading over the 22 Assembly Constituencies (ACs), viz. 1. Lilong, 2. Thoubal, 3. Wangkhem, 4. Heirok, 5. Wangjing Tentha, 6. Khangabok; four of Kakching District viz. 7. Wabagai, 8. Kakching, 9. Hiyanglam, 10. Sugnu, 11. Jiribam, 12. Chandel (ST), 13. Tengnoupal (ST), 14. Phungyar (ST), 15. Ukhrul (ST), 16. Chingai (ST), 17. Karong (ST), 18. Mao (ST), 19. Tadubi (ST), 20. Tamei (ST), 21. Tamenglong (ST), and 22. Nungba (ST). A total number of voters eligible for exercising their franchise were 10,79,369.

The Congress and BJP have put up 22 candidates each for the fray. There were two CPI candidates, six Trinamool Congress candidates, one NCP candidate, 12 recognised State political parties' candidates, 24 registered unrecognised parties' candidates, and 24 independent candidates in the second and final round of the elections. Altogether 98 candidates, including four women, were in the fray for the remaining 22 seats. There were 29 Crorepati candidates in the second and final phase of the State Assembly elections, according to the report prepared by the MEW and ADR on the basis of the self-sworn affidavit submitted by the candidates themselves at the time of filing nomination. New Delhi, March 2 (IANS). At least 30 per cent candidates in the second phase of the MAE are Crorepatis, with the Congress topping the list as 10 of its 22 candidates (46 per cent) declared assets of over Rs 1 Crore. The report stated that out of the 98 candidates analysed, 29 were Crorepatis. Among party wise Crorepati candidates, Delhi-based ADR said that 10 of 22 fielded by INC, 8 of 22 from BJP, one of seven from NPP, five of 11 from Naga Peoples Front, one of four from Manipur National Democratic Front and two Independent candidates have declared assets worth more than Rs One Crore. The average assets per contesting candidate were Rs 1.33 Crore. Among major parties, the average assets per candidate for 22 INC candidates is Rs 3.11 Crore, 22 BJP candidates (Rs 1.29 Crore), 7 NPP candidates (Rs 38.02 lakh), 5 IJIP candidates (Rs 37.58 lakh), 6 AITC candidates (Rs 6.97 lakh), 11 Naga Peoples Front (Rs 90.37 lakh), 2 CPI candidates (Rs 24.25 lakh) and 9 Independent candidates (Rs 1.40 Crore). On the education details of candidates, the report said that 24 have declared their qualification to be between 5th pass and 12th pass, while 72 having a qualification of graduate and above. One candidate has declared himself as just illiterate.

A total of 46 candidates have declared their age to be between 25 and 50 years, while 52 between 51 and 80 years. The overall voter turnout for the state elections had been recorded at 86.61 per cent (Male- 84.62%, Female-88.51%). The overall voters turned out of the 11th MAE 2017 were an unprecedented all-time high in the history of electoral politics in Manipur. In Lok Sabha Elections 2009 for two parliamentary seats of Manipur, the turnout was 76 per cent, while it was 77.18 per cent in the 2012 assembly polls, and 78.2 per cent in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

Issues: Economic Blockade:

The 11th MAE 2017 to be held in two phases was held when the economic blockade called by United Naga Council (UNC), All Naga Students' Association Manipur (ANSAM) at the state lifelines - National Highway (Imphal-Dimapur Road) and National Highway 37 (Imphal-Silchar) was ongoing. Undoubtedly Economic Blockade was the most pressing issue. The said blockade was a follow on of the total shut down called by the UNC against the 'lopsided decision of the state government to upgrade Sadar Hills and Jiribam to full-fledged districts and against "State sponsored terrorism by the communal GoM." In the electioneering of 11th MAE 2017, the two principal contending parties, the BJP and the INC have obviously the most highly pitched battle on the issue of economic blockade. The BJP used the UNC's ongoing indefinite economic blockade of national highways in Manipur, to target the INC and Chief Minister Okram Ibobi. The INC counter-alleged the UNC's ongoing indefinite economic blockade as being instigated by BJP and imposed at their behest.

Past successive governments remained non-committal on the issue of granting a status of full-fledged revenue district due to the perceived fear that it might lead to escalating ethnic tension. As early as 14 December 1981, a Cabinet sub-Committee had been appointed for carving out new revenue districts and re-adjustments and demarcation of the state boundary in the proposed unit by taking into consideration the population, ethnic affinities and compactness of the area or any other suitable criteria. Since the very beginning, the demand for Sadar hills were met with opposition from the Naga bodies in the state and otherwise. The demand for creating Sadar Hills District by bifurcating the Senapati District of Manipur was made on the basis of the inconveniences of the people living far away from the existing District headquarters of Senapati. But it was construed by a faction group of the Naga ethnic army outfit as a step towards the realization of 'Kukiland' which collide with the proposed 'Nagalim'. In connection with it NSCN-IM took the stand that it cannot include even an inch of the land of the Nagas. Such stands of the NSCN-IM were later parroted by the overground organizations of the Nagas. The issue also came to the forefront ahead of the Manipur assembly poll in 2007. Almost all the political parties in the fray except few individuals fielded by UNC pledged to support to grant the status of full-fledged revenue district to the sub-division if elected to power. On 1st August 2011, just barely seven months before the 10th MAE 2012 to be held, the indefinite economic blockade preceding the sit-in protest by the Sadar Hills District Council members and leaders of Sadar Hills District Demand Committee (SHDDC) staging a sit-in-protest at the office complex of Additional Deputy Commissioner Kangpokpi, "against 40-years denial of Justice on the Sadar Hills

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District issue imposed an indefinite economic Blockade along NH-2, 37 and 150 (Tipaimukh Road). That time around a prominent Kuki legislator of the ruling Congress party also resigned from his Ministerial post in support of fulfilling the demand for Sadar Hills District. The Nagas opposed the issue as the UNC in response to their movement also imposed indefinite counter economic blockade along NH-2 in Manipur. The SHDDC even went to the extent of banning all 'poll/MLA election related activities in the in Sadar Hills during the current month of October' 2011. The people of Jiribam for long also had been demanding the up-gradation of the sub-division into a full-fledged revenue district. In connection with it, the State Cabinet Meeting held at the Conference Hall of the Chief Minister with himself in the chair on 27 November 2006 did discuss the issue of the conversion of Jiribam sub-division into a full-fledged revenue district but had to differ the agenda as there were differences of opinion on the matter vis-à-vis the similar demand to upgrade Sadar Hills to a full-fledged revenue district. The Jiribam District Demand Committee (JDDC) constituted by 18 different social organizations of Jiribam sub-division had earlier set 18 December as the deadline to upgrade the subdivision. But the Cabinet Meeting held at 27 December 2006 was indecisive about the conferment of district status to Jiribam. This led to the further intensification of the agitation with the ceasing of the survey work of the Jiri-Tupul Rail Line and also resolved not to pay any form of taxes to the state government. Ahead of 9th MAE 2007, a political body which tried to cash in on the growing resentment of the people also came into existence with the formation of "Progressive Development Forum" on 2 January 2007 with the President of Janata Dal (Secular) of Jiribam Unit as Chairman and President of BJP Jiribam Mandal as Convenor. It pledges to extend unconditional support to the JDDC. The JDDC also, just ahead of the 10th MAE 2012 signed a memorandum with the GoM agreeing mutually on 9 November 2011 for the upgradation of Jiribam Sub-Division to a full-fledged revenue district. In the electioneering of 11th MAE 2017, the two principal contending parties have obviously the most highly pitched battle on the issue of economic blockade. The BJP used the UNC's ongoing indefinite economic blockade of national highways in Manipur, to target the Congress and Chief Minister Okram Ibobi. At his rally in Imphal on February, Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised to end the blockade if BJP came to power in the state. BJP president Amit Shah even went to the extent saying that the blockade would end within 24 hours of his party assuming charge in Imphal. Many of the ruling INC leadership, including the President and the incumbent Chief Minister also counter-alleged that UNC's ongoing indefinite economic blockade was being instigated and imposed at the behest of the BJP.

(To be Contd.....)

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