

Citizenship Bill plunges Assam into political uncertainty ahead of LS polls

Agency
Guwahati, Jan 13,

The Asom Gana Parishad's (AGP) withdrawal of support BJP-led government in Assam last week in protest against the Bill has triggered political uncertainty and fuelled speculations about new political equations. The BJP on Sunday played down an offer from the Congress to support Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal if he forms a breakaway government in the light of a massive public opposition to the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill. The Congress sees an opportunity for a comeback in the current political turbulence and has urged Sonowal to quit the saffron party along with MLAs loyal to him. "It's an old offer. Sonowal himself and many BJP

MLAs have said in the past that they will never support any cause which is detrimental to Assam or Assamese people. Since a large section in Assam is opposed to the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, Sonowal along with his supporters should quit the BJP," said senior Congress leader Debabrata Saikia. "We are willing to support a Sonowal -led government, from within or outside, if the chief minister takes up our offer," Saikia, who is leader of opposition in the Assam assembly, added. The BJP has 62 seats in the 126-member assembly while coalition partner Bodo Peoples' Front has 12. The AGP has 14 MLAs, the Congress 24 and All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) has 13. The ruling party insists that Sonowal ditching the BJP is unthinkable.

"Saikia's offer is completely hypothetical. Sonowal is a mass leader who knows that the Bill is going to benefit the people of Assam in the long run. He is not hungry for power and there's no question of him leaving BJP to join hands with Congress," said BJP's Assam unit chief Ranjit Dass. The Bill which seeks to grant citizenship to Hindus, Parsis, Sikhs, Christians, Jains and Buddhists from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, was passed in the Lok Sabha last week and is expected to come up for voting in Rajya Sabha in the next session beginning on January 31. Fears of threat to indigenous populations from immigrants from Bangladesh due to passage of the Bill has led to protests in all seven states in the region and

some BJP allies have threatened to follow the AGP if the amendment is passed in Rajya Sabha. Amid the turbulence, the AGP on Saturday gave indications of joining hands with the BJP again if the saffron party withdraws the Bill in the interest of Assam. "It seems highly improbable that the BJP would backtrack on its support to the Bill now. But if they do, we may reconsider our earlier stance. Otherwise there's no question to supporting them again," said AGP president Atul Bora. The former minister in the Sonowal cabinet denied speculations that AGP might form an alliance with the Congress or AIUDF. Bora also refused to comment on whether his party will contest Lok Sabha polls alone or join an alliance.

Amending Constitution for quota 'harmful', says Sharad Pawar

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Amending the Constitution to increase the reservation limit is "harmful" to its basic principles according to experts, NCP chief Sharad Pawar said on Sunday, days after parliament cleared a bill to provide 10 per cent quota to economically backward sections among the general category. He said last-minute decisions by the Narendra Modi government with an eye on polls will not be

helpful in swaying the mood of the electorates. Pawar further said political films like 'The Accidental Prime Minister', based on former PM Manmohan Singh, and 'Thackeray', a biopic on Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray, won't have an impact on voters. "According to the opinion of experts, amendment in Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution to allow reservations above 50 per cent will be harmful to the basic principles of the Constitution," Pawar said here, replying to queries on

the Centre's move to grant reservation to poor among the general category. "The Supreme Court cleared its stand on the policy of reservations more than two times. The SC decisions state that reservations cannot be above the limit of fifty per cent," he added. Speaking about films based on political personalities, Pawar said, "People will not change their opinions after seeing these films. I don't think these films will play any crucial role in the coming elections. People will vote

on the basis of their experiences. He claimed the Centre planned to have an extended Budget session of Parliament in order to pass some more bills with an eye on forthcoming general polls "The Modi government is trying to take some decisions in a hurry after sensing the mood of people. But people are well aware about such decisions taken after four -and half years. People will see these decisions as jumbas (poll rhetoric)," he said.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016

Highlights of the Bill

The Bill amends the Citizenship Act, 1955 to make illegal migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, eligible for citizenship. Under the Act, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalisation is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, and for 11 of the previous 14 years. The Bill relaxes this 11 year requirement to six years for persons belonging to the same six religions and three countries. The Bill provides that the registration of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders may be cancelled if they violate any law.

Key Issues and Analysis

The Bill makes illegal migrants eligible for citizenship on the basis of religion. This may violate Article 14 of the Constitution which guarantees right to equality.

The Bill allows cancellation of OCI registration for violation of any law. This is a wide ground that may cover a range of violations, including minor offences (eg. parking in a no parking zone).

PART A: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BILL

Context

The Citizenship Act, 1955 regulates who may acquire Indian citizenship and on what grounds. A person may become an Indian citizen if they are born in India or have Indian parentage or have resided in the country over a period of time, etc. However, illegal migrants are prohibited from acquiring Indian citizenship. An illegal migrant is a foreigner who: (i) enters the country without valid travel documents, like a passport and visa, or (ii) enters with valid documents, but stays beyond the permitted time period.[1]

Illegal migrants may be imprisoned or deported under the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920. The 1946 and the 1920 Acts empower the central government to regulate the entry, exit and residence of foreigners within India. In 2015 and 2016, the central government issued two notifications exempting certain groups of illegal migrants from provisions of the 1946 and the 1920 Acts.[2] These groups are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who arrived in India on or before December 31, 2014.2 This implies that these groups of illegal migrants will not be deported or imprisoned for being in India without valid documents. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 19, 2016 to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955. It seeks to make illegal migrants belonging to the same six religions and three countries eligible for citizenship.

The Bill also makes amendments to provisions related to Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders. A foreigner may register as an OCI under the 1955 Act if they are of Indian origin (eg. former citizen of India or their descendants) or the spouse of a person of Indian origin. This will entitle them to benefits such as the right to travel to India, and to work and study in the country. The Bill amends the Act to allow cancellation of OCI registration if the person has violated any law.

Key Features

Definition of illegal migrants

The Citizenship Act, 1955 prohibits illegal migrants from acquiring Indian citizenship. The Bill amends the Act to provide that the following minority groups will not be treated as illegal migrants: Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. However, to get this benefit, they must have also been exempted from the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 by the central government.

Citizenship by naturalisation

The 1955 Act allows a person to apply for citizenship by naturalisation if he meets certain qualifications. One of these is that the person must have resided in India or served the central government for a certain period of time: (i) for the 12 months immediately preceding the application for citizenship, and (ii) for 11 of the 14 years preceding the 12-month period. For people belonging to the same six religions and three countries, the Bill relaxes the 11-year requirement to six years. Cancellation of registration of Overseas Citizen of India cardholder

The 1955 Act provides that the central government may cancel registration of OCIs on certain grounds, including: (i) if the OCI had registered through fraud, or (ii) if within five years of registration, the OCI was sentenced to imprisonment for two years or more. The Bill adds one more ground for cancelling registration, that is, if the OCI has violated any law in the country.

PART B: KEY ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

Whether differentiating on grounds of religion is a violation of Article 14

The Bill provides that illegal migrants belonging to specified minority communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan will not be treated as illegal migrants under the Act, making them eligible for Indian citizenship. These minority communities are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians. This implies that illegal migrants from these countries who are Muslims, other minorities who do not belong to the above groups (eg. Jews), or Atheists who do not identify with a religious group will not be eligible for citizenship. The question is whether this provision violates the right to equality guaranteed under Article 14 of the Constitution because it provides differential treatment to illegal migrants on the basis of their religion.

Article 14 guarantees equality to all persons, citizens and foreigners. It only permits laws to differentiate between groups of people if the rationale for doing so serves a reasonable purpose.[3] The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill does not explain the rationale behind differentiating between illegal migrants on the basis of the religion they belong to.

Wide ground for cancelling OCI registration

Under the 1955 Act, an Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholder's registration may be cancelled if he violates a law for which he is: (i) sentenced to imprisonment for two years or more, and (ii) within five years of his OCI registration. The Bill adds another ground for cancelling OCI registration, which is violation of any law of the country by an OCI. This means that even offences with: (i) lesser penalties, or (ii) which have been committed after five years of registration could be covered under the Bill. This makes the earlier provision redundant.

This provision also grants the central government wide discretion to cancel OCI registration for a range of violations. This will include serious offences like murder, as well as minor offences like violation of a traffic law (such as parking in a no-parking zone or jumping a red light). The question is whether minor violations should result in cancellation of OCI registration, which may require an OCI who is staying in India to leave the country.

[1]. Section 2(1)(b) of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

[2]. G.S.R. 685 (E) and G.S.R. 686 (E), Gazette of India, September 7, 2015; G.S.R. 702(E) and G.S.R. 703(E), Gazette of India, July 18, 2016.

[3]. State of West Bengal vs Anwar Ali Sarkar, AIR 1952 SC 75.

Mumbai Rockets to face Bengaluru Raptors in the final of Vodafone PBL4

Defending champions Hyderabad Hunters bow out

Grand finale in Bengaluru on Sunday

IT News
Bengaluru, Jan 13,

Mumbai Rockets ended the title defence of the Hyderabad Hunters to set up a summit clash with the Bengaluru Raptors at the Vodafone Premier Badminton League Season 4 at the Kanteerava Indoor Stadium, here on Saturday. Mumbai Trump Sameer Verma played a brilliant match before Anders Antonsen finished off what was a dominant 4-2 win for the two-time runners-up. Mumbai will hope to be third time lucky after losses to the Delhi Acers and the Chennai Smashers in the first two seasons. The Rockets looked the better of the two teams for most part of the tie, racing ahead to 4-0 before PV Sindhu could finally open the Hunters' account. It was only a matter of time before Mumbai wrapped it up. The superb Sameer wasn't bothered by the fact that he had lost his last BWF showdown to World No. 35 Mark Caljouw.

Asserting his supremacy right from the start, the Mumbai shuttler raced ahead to 8-2 before the Dutchman could not even settle into the match. Staying very calm, Verma grabbed the first game 15-8. Sameer smartly blunted Caljouw's aggression even in the second game to move ahead to 8-2. Using his deception to perfection, Verma wrapped it up 15-8, 15-7. Hyderabad's Lee Hyun Il was able to stave off a resilient Anders Antonsen to go up to 8-6 in the fourth rubber. Despite Lee going up to 13-11, the young Dane looked unfazed and steadily fought back to take the opener 15-13. Antonsen didn't have to work as hard in the one-sided second game. He held control of the proceedings throughout the game, building an 11-6 advantage before finishing off a 15-13, 15-6 victory that sealed the tie. World No. 3 PV Sindhu was the lone bright spot for Hyderabad. She was always a tall order for the

202nd ranked Shreyanshi Pardeshi of the Mumbai Rockets. Even though Sindhu did secure a 15-6, 15-5 win, the rising star did have her moments. Her netgame did trouble the lanky Sindhu to a certain extent in the first game and she managed to trail her highly accomplished opponent by just one point at 7-8. However, once Sindhu upped the intensity in her attack, it became an uphill task for Pardeshi. Overhitting under pressure didn't help her cause at all as Sindhu opened up a 7-0 lead in the second game. It was

all too one-sided after that as Sindhu cantered to an easy win. Earlier, Lee Yong Dae and Kim Gi Jung gave Mumbai a dream start with a 15-14, 15-12 win over Hyderabad's Bodin Isara and Kim Sa-Rang. While the first game remained highly competitive, the second game was in the grip of the Hyderabad duo for a long time. Bodin and Kim led till 8-5 in Game 2 but could not prevent the Mumbai duo from making a strong comeback to go up to 13-11 before they closed out the win.

Mark Sheet and Certificate lost

I, the undersigned, Leishangthem Sushila Devi, Daughter of Leishangthem Hemanta, of Singamei Leishangthem Leikai, Dated of birth: 1st February 1974, have lost my Mark Sheet and certificate for my class X exam conducted by Board of Secondary Education Manipur 1991 on the way between Singamei to Paona Bazaar on Jan 2, 2019. Finders are requested to hand over it to the undersigned.

Sd/-

Leishangthem Sushila Devi
D/o Leishangthem Hemanta
Singamei Leishangthem Leikai, Imphal