

Editorial

Saturday, July 20, 2019

July 27: the day that will decide the fate of BJP led govt. in Manipur

July 27, perhaps is a day of judgment that will decide the fate of both the Chief Minister N. Biren Singh and those dissidents revolting for change of him.

As the ball is in the court of the BJP central leadership, even though the Central leadership still keep the issue pending, both the parties of the BJP who are supporting N. Biren Singh as well the dissidents are having high hopes of their own. Chief Minister N. Biren Singh is confident of protecting his position while the dissident MLAs are living with high hope that the center will make some announcement to make sure that a new arrangement for change of the Chief Minister will be decided.

The present political crisis among the BJP MLAs leading the government in the state of Manipur on the other hand has received criticism from sections of people particularly from farmers who are facing extreme difficulties due to scarcity of rainfall. Big dams constructed to provide water in the cultivable land round the years do not work, huge amount spend to the Minor Irrigation department for the farmers have been wasted as most construction for the purpose were one just for name sake. To recall the kind of works executed by the Command Area Development Authority (CADA), the government had wasted crores and crores of rupees for many ghost works that were never seen taken up by the farmers.

In the last couple of days Manipur witness some rainfall, but it fails to reach the field. However, the water levels of rivers of the state rise. The distribution of pump sets to farmers may have been somewhat helpful to some few farmers, but majority of the farmers were left with no choice but to shed tears.

Had the MLAs who had been staying/camping at New Delhi demanding replacement of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh stayed at their respective area they could have taken up measures to least provide some aids to the farmers.

Well the dissidents had now hardened their stand forgetting that the farmers of the state are facing extreme difficulties. There only stand is to replace the Chief Minister.

The way things are happening in the state shows that there is something going to happen on July 27. Whether N. Biren Singh continues as the Chief Minister or is replaced will be known on that day. This is rightly speculated as Tribunal of the Manipur Legislative Assembly had taken up the case for disqualification of the 7 Congress MLA who had supported the N. Biren Singh government and unofficially joined the BJP. As for Congress MLA Shyamkumar who had joined the BJP even before he was sworn as the MLA and become a cabinet minister, the law court is soon announcing a verdict.

Who win the battle is not what the people of the state care? But what worries to the people is that if the dissidents win and succeeded in changing the Chief Minister, will the BJP who have only 21 MLA of its own be able to form the government. On the hidden war the BJP dissidents are attacking the collision partners. Except for the NPP, it seems like other supporters from other political parties may depart as the dissidents are making less concern for them. 21 plus 4 is not the magic number to form a government which have 60 seats.

In view of the current situation it is likely that if N. Biren Singh is replace there will be a minority government. If suppose, the BJP manage, who will replace N. Biren Singh. There seems no captain claiming support and of the so call 14 dissidents. Each and every one of them wants to become the Chief Minister.

That was when the center will left no option but to impose president rule under article 356 of the Indian Constitution.

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DON'T YOU FEEL THE PULSE OF THE PEOPLE ?

Political crises in BJP Manipur family is indicative of a weak party administration

By : Seram Neken

Human greed has no limit. Naturally, MLAs want to become Ministers and Ministers want to become Chief Minister, no matter whether they have the quality, capacity and wisdom to hold the posts. Rebellion or revolts against existing governments must be orchestrated with prior consideration of time, situation and public sentiment, because in Parliamentary Democracies, the pulse of the people is supreme.

Even after series of one-to-one meetings between the so called central leaders and the BJP legislators for over a month in the national capital as well as in Imphal, the crisis is yet to conclude. The ball is finally in the court of the highest level of party leadership now that will decide the fate of the Manipur BJP which may well be compared to a toddling child in the state's soil. Hence, the decision will be crucial and highly impactful in the contemporary political history of north east India, because of the fact that BJP and the Sangh Parivar see Manipur as most strategic connecting link between mainland India and its North East region owing to its rich cultural heritage and history with the INA during the pre-Independence era.

Looking back to the recent history of the party in Manipur, BJP Manipur under the leadership of Shantikumar Sharma suffered a humiliating defeat in the 2012 Manipur Assembly election in spite of hectic efforts made by central leaders like President Nitin Gadkari, Prakash Javedkar, Chandrashekhar Rao and Tapir Gao. All candidates lost their deposits. Thereafter, political heavyweights entered the party.

Former Union Minister Th. Chaoba joined the BJP on 8th June 2012 and became the State President of the party. Some existing leaders of the party raised objections, but it fell on deaf ears. Later, former candidate of CPI M Asnikumar joined the party. Former Minister and Veteran Political leader from the Kuki community V Hangkhalian who was the state president of the NPP joined the BJP. Then Working President of MSCP Adim Panmei joined the party after five MSCP MLAs merged with the Congress.

Manipur BJP repositioned itself with new appointments such as M. Asnikumar as State General Secretary (Administration), Premananda Sharma as State General Secretary (Organisation) and KshBhabanandaas General Secretary, while V Hangkhalian, Adim Panmei, S Rajen, Y Khemchand were appointed as State Vice Presidents. After a few months Y Khemchand and S Rajen were expelled from the party due to strong difference of opinion with the state party president. After 7/8 months, they were reinstated in the party membership through reconciliation and compromise.

In 2013, there was high hopes after Chaoba became the President. Lots of people were inducted into the party as a result of dedicated hard work and perseverance. In 2014 Lok Sabha election, BJP projected candidates in both the outer and the inner parliamentary constituencies - noted historian Professor Gangmumei Kamei and Environmentalist Dr. RK Ranjan respectively. Prof. Gangmumei got 75,000 votes and Dr. Ranjan got nearly one lakh votes and this greatly built up the popularity of BJP in Manipur.

In 2012 Assembly elections, AITC won in six Assembly Constituencies. In the by-elections held in the aftermath of the death of Hiyanglam Constituency MLA Maibam Kunjo, BJP lost its seat. In 2015 Autonomous District Council (ADC) election which was held after 20 years in 6 districts of Manipur namely Churachandpur, Chandel, Senapati, Sadar Hills, Tamenglong and Ukhrul, BJP contested for 121 seats out of total 144 seats. The party won 21 seats, 66 stood second position. Thus, popularity of the party raised in the hills too.

One day prior to the crucial ADC election on 30th May 2015, three MLAs of Trinamool Congress namely Khjoykishan, Th. Biswajit and O. Lukhoi tried to merge with BJP under Shri Ram Madhav. They were disqualified under the provisions of 10th Schedule of Indian Constitution. Joykishan and Biswajit faced the by-elections, while O Lukhoi challenged the decision in the court.

In May 2016, Th. Chaoba was again projected as the party President, which upset the party MLAs - Joykishan and Biswajit. Suddenly, leadership change occurred in the Manipur BJP with KshBhabananda Singh appointed as the President on 2nd May 2016. MLA Th. Bishwajit was made General Secretary and MLA Kh. Joykishan the leader of the legislature party in State Assembly. Th. Chaoba was appointed Convenor of State Election Management Committee. Because of difference in opinion, Joykishan left the party just before 2017 Assembly election and joined Congress.

Keeping important issues on priority, BJP robbed in many political heavyweights from other parties. Sitting Congress MLA of Wangkhei Constituency Y. Erabot resigned from the Assembly and officially joined the BJP on 12th September 2016. Veteran Politician and Former Minister N. Mangi, the then National Council Member of the CPI joined the BJP on 5th February 2016. Present Chief Minister of Manipur N. Biren Singh left the Congress party and joined BJP in October 2016. Sitting Congress MLA and former Cabinet Minister Francis Ngajokpa resigned from the Assembly and joined the BJP. Sitting Congress MLA from Kangpokpi Constituency Nemcha Kipgen too entered the BJP.

Even though BJP projected candidates in all 60 constituencies in 2017 assembly elections, BJP got only 21 seats while the Congress party swept 28 seats. With the support of four NPP MLAs, four NPP MLAs, Th. Shyamkumar of Congress party, one LJP MLA, one Trinamool Congress MLA and one Independent MLA, the new government of Manipur was formed with N Biren Singh as the Chief Minister. After a few months of the government formation, 7 MLAs from the congress party defected to the ruling party. Their entry in the BJP fold has been crucial, as without the 7 from the Congress, NPP & NPF would have held the government hostage.

The rule of BJP coalition under the leadership of journalist-turned-politician N Biren Singh during the last two years stint could well transform the socio-political atmosphere in the state. Three-month old economic blockade was lifted, nine martyrs of Churachandpur were accepted by the families and their funeral performed. Hill valley divide was practically bridged to a great extent.

Besides inheriting nearly ten thousand crores of debt from the previous government, N Biren Singh led coalition had to put efforts for completion of several incomplete projects. Huge financial burden for payment of salary for over 10,000 employees recruited before the 2017 elections by the previous government fell on the new government.

Huge Scams have been unearthed since N Biren Singh became the Chief Minister of Manipur. MDS scam running into over 400 crores without completing any work broke out and the case has been taken up by the Vigilance department. Loktak Scam, CCTV Camera scam, Paper Belt, Second MR Arms missing case are among the list of misappropriations uncovered during the present regime.

The establishment of Manipur Lokayukta in 2019 and the appointment of Justice (Retd) T. Nandakumar Singh as Chairman along with Justice (Retd) Basu Deo Agarwal and Ameising Luikham (Retd) IAS as Judicial and Non Judicial member was a remarkable positive step towards ensuring accountability and integrity in public office.

During the rule of Chief Minister N Biren, the Manipur Human Rights Commission and the Manipur Information Commission have been activated. Much needed rapport between the governed and the government has been reestablished with the Chief Minister's *Meeyamgi Numeetand Hill Leaders' Day*, *'Let's Go to Village Mission'*, *'Chief Minister's Initiative for Hakshelgi Tengbang'*, *'Chief Minister's Initiative for Sotharabasinggi Tengbang'* etc. have drastically reduced the long impending trust deficit among the people. The law and order situation has tremendously improved in the state. In recognition of his remarkable

services as a Chief Minister, the India Today ranked N Biren Singh as the best CM among BJP ruled states of India. At various fora, Biren Singh is also informally given the title of **People's Chief Minister**.

In spite of these good works, the CM is not free from blame within and without. At present, a chunk of BJP MLAs including Ministers have been in revolt for change of guard in Manipur. The outcome is that a few Cabinet Ministers absented themselves from the Cabinet Meetings which were supposed to take crucial decisions. The impending month-long infighting in the BJP Manipur between the Biren-opposers and Biren-supporters has provoked the mindset of the people now. Many questions raised among various circles. First: Is N. Biren incompetent to hold the post of Chief Minister? Second: Who is the contender for the post of Chief Ministership? Third: Does the people want to replace N. Biren Singh as Chief Minister? Fourth: Is it timely for the BJP MLAs to revolt for change of guard?

Central leaders must be fully aware of the real intention of those trying to break the BJP led coalition government of Manipur. When BJP leaders including Narendra Modi were in hectic electioneering to wrest power for a second innings in the Lok Sabha, some state politicians rather than focusing on the party's performance in the Lok Sabha elections, brewed complaints and demanded replacement of N. Biren Singh. They have been camping in Delhi sidelining the public outcry for want of stability amidst the states burning issues like the impending drought situation. It is anybody's guess that the BJP being a disciplined party would not encourage the dissident culture.

Moreover, leadership change is not an easy task. It will set a bad precedent for other states like Himachal, Arunachal, Assam, Tripura and Goa in future. In BJP, dissident movement has never led to change of government. Mudslinging within the party, publicly speaking out regarding differences among leaders, using social media and newspaper to manipulate public opinion would not be taken lightly by the central leaders of BJP.

Had the leadership in BJP Manipur been competent and partial enough, such differences of opinions within the party family would have been sorted out earlier. Unfortunately, the weakness and incompetency of the leadership in BJP Manipur's administration unfolded day by day with the deepening of the crises.

Finally, political leaders both local and national, must remember that the Northeastern Region has always been crippled with sensitive issues, and public opinion always rests with leaders who focus on public issues rather than self-interests. It is high time our legislators felt the pulse of the people.

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