

# Citizenship bill row may shape poll result in Northeast

Courtesy - The Hindustan Times

The Assam Rifles ground in Mizoram's capital Aizawl looked deserted on Republic Day. A boycott call by prominent NGOs and civil society groups made many stay away, forcing governor K Rajasekharaan address a near-empty ground. The boycott was to protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016 (CAB), which proposes to give citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains and Parsis from Muslim-majority Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. CAB was passed by Lok Sabha in January and was to be tabled in the Rajya Sabha in February in the last session of Parliament ahead of the general election. But stiff resistance in Assam and other states of the Northeast by student bodies, indigenous groups and even by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) allies deterred the government from tabling the legislation, which is now set to lapse. The Centre's decision was hailed as a "historic win" and "victory of the people", but subsequent assertions by BJP president Amit Shah and other leaders about the party's plan to reintroduce the legislation, if voted to power, turned the brief celebrations into dismay and anger. Fear of the outsider is a dominant theme in the Northeast's socio-political discourse. The region has seen mass movements against illegal immigrants, the most prominent being the six-year-long Assam Agitation, which claimed 855 lives and ended with signing of the Assam Accord in 1985. The protests against the CAB stemmed from the dread of foreigners outnumbering locals. And the BJP, which strongly favours the CAB, may see its poll calculations being upset in the coming Lok Sabha election. From an also-ran, the BJP emerged as the biggest party in the region in the past three years. It heads governments in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura and is part of coalitions headed by allies in Nagaland and Meghalaya. The transformation took place as BJP managed to shed its hardline Hindutva stance and forge friendships through the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA)—a platform for parties in the region opposed to the Congress, which had been the biggest national

player in the region until a few years ago. But the goodwill and votes garnered by projecting the party as the true friend of the region could now backfire as there's fear that the BJP could use the CAB to secure the votes of Hindu Bangladeshis—something that could sideline indigenous voters who see a threat to their language, culture, land rights and identity. "The issue will hurt the BJP very much. Everyone, especially people in the small tribal states, are wary of the CAB as they won't be able to bear the burden of migrants," said Patricia Mukhim, editor of The Shillong Times. ALLIANCE WORRIES With the CAB not getting tabled in the Rajya Sabha last month and protests across the region subsiding, the BJP was able to mend some of the broken fences with its alliance partners. Earlier this month, BJP national general secretary Ram Madhav announced tie-ups with the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP), National People's Party (NPP), Indigenous People's Front Tripura (IPFT), Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), Bodo People's Front (BPF) and Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM), and expressed confidence that it would win at least 22 of the 25 seats in the region. While the NDPP heads the government in Nagaland, the NPP is the single largest party in the Meghalaya assembly and governs the state in a coalition (of which the BJP is part). The BPF is a coalition partner of the BJP in Assam, as was the AGP, before it exited the alliance two months ago over CAB. The party has since come back to the NEDA fold. But cracks soon started appearing. In Sikkim, the SKM decided to contest polls alone, NPP fielded its own candidates across the Northeast and the IPFT and BJP have separate candidates for the two Lok Sabha seats in Tripura. While the BJP top brass has denied it would have any impact, the development has come as a breather for the Congress. In 2014, Congress had won eight of the 25 seats in the region, the same number as the BJP. This time the party is banking on the CAB and other local issues to improve its tally. "BJP's allies have seen that the party, contrary to its statements, is not a true friend of Northeast. This will help us win at least 16 seats this time," said Arunachal Pradesh

Congress president Takam Sanjoy. "The CAB united not just regional parties in Northeast, but protests across Assam, Manipur, Mizoram and other states showed that students bodies and other civil society groups are also opposed to it. That will definitely impact the BJP negatively. Despite the party's claims that the bill will not lead to influx of foreigners, not many believe that," said J. Doungel, a professor at Mizoram University: COUNTER MEASURES The protests against the CAB were most widespread in Assam, where over 100 organisations comprising students and indigenous groups took to the streets, seeking withdrawal of the legislation. The state's biggest regional party, the AGP, which was born in 1985 after the signing of the Assam Accord, quit the BJP-led coalition in January in protest against the bill, though it returned to the alliance in March. Since then, a number of senior leaders of the regional party, including founder and former chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, have criticised the alliance. Chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal, a former student leader who was also in AGP before switching to BJP, has vociferously defended the bill and said its provisions are being misinterpreted and instead of hurting indigenous populations, it will secure their rights. With 14 LS seats, the highest among all NE states, Assam will be crucial to the BJP's plans. In 2014, the party had won seven seats. Unlike in the Brahmaputra Valley, where the opposition to the CAB is more vociferous, the bill has the support of Bengali-speaking majority in the Barak Valley, which has two seats. Following the outrage against the BJP, the Centre tried to douse the situation by initiating a slew of measures. This included accepting a longstanding demand by six communities in Assam seeking scheduled tribe (ST) status, a high-level committee to implement Clause 6 of Assam Accord that seeks to protect the rights of Assamese people, more power to autonomous district councils and conferring the Bharat Ratna posthumously on Bhupen Hazarika, the biggest cultural icon from the state.

Significantly, despite the protests, the BJP emerged as the biggest party in the panchayat polls held in December and the party and its allies won elections to autonomous councils and town committees across the state. In Arunachal Pradesh, another state under BJP rule, chief minister Pema Khandu attempted to allay fears by stressing that the state would not come under the purview of the bill as the provision of inner line permit (ILP), which keeps tab on those from outside the state, is in operation. "The CAB controversy will have no impact in Arunachal Pradesh as we are protected by constitutional provisions which keeps tab on entry of outsiders," said BJP state unit chief Tapir Gao. CHANGE OF SCENARIO Arunachal has two LS seats, one of them is represented by union minister of state for home Kiren Rijiju, while the other is held by the Congress. The state will also elect a new legislature simultaneously. Politics in no other state in the Northeast is as unpredictable as in Arunachal Pradesh. Voters in the easternmost state elected a Congress government to power in 2014. But in the next few years, the state saw four different chief ministers and also a brief period of President's Rule. Incumbent chief minister Pema Khandu took oath in July 2016 as a Congress legislator after the Supreme Court intervened and forced his predecessor to quit. But within two months, he switched sides and joined the Peoples Party of Arunachal along with a majority of MLAs. In less than four months, on the last day of 2016, Khandu and his supporters joined the BJP. The past two years witnessed relative stability and BJP was expecting another term in office without much of a problem. But the scenario changed towards the end of February when protests against the granting of permanent citizenship certificates (PRCs) to nearly 30,000 people from six communities led to widespread violence and claimed three lives. In Mizoram, sensing the public sentiment against the bill, chief minister Zoramthanga expressed his displeasure and has even threatened to pull out of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at Centre if it is brought back. Though his party, the Mizo National Front, is also part of NEDA, it managed to secure a comfortable majority on its own in the assembly polls held last year and kept BJP,

which won one seat, at a distance. In Tripura, both the Lok Sabha seats are held by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). But given the party's loss to the BJP last year, it could be difficult for the CPI(M) to retain them. In Manipur, chief minister N Biren Singh, who heads the BJP-led coalition government, has opposed the bill in its present form unless it has clauses to protect indigenous populations of the region. The BJP's allies in Meghalaya and Nagaland, where the party is a minor partner in government, have also expressed reservations about the bill.

By Our Correspondent Guwahati, March 31,

Journalists' Forum Assam (JFA), while expressing concern over a recent court order sentencing a city based scribe for the inappropriate media coverage, made nearly a decade back, urges the media fraternity to pursue quality journalism with authentic facts. The scribe's body, in a statement issued today, pointed out that over enthusiasm as well as unwanted activism would only spoil the medium, which is facing tremendous challenges from the alternate/social media around the world. The mainstream media

should be more cautious now as it starts losing public supports, it added. Notably, Bikash Sarma, former editor of a city based English daily, was convicted by the Kamrup district court following a defamation case filed in 2010 by Himanta Biswa Sarma, then a Congress minister in Tarun Gogoi's cabinet and presently the State finance minister of BJP led government in Dispur. The court imposed a fine of rupees 5,000 and simple imprisonment for one month to Bikash Sarma, as his newspaper quoted Krishak Mukti Sangram Samity leader Akhil Gogoi as making a

statement that RH Khan, an accused scam star, gifted a car to the minister. But during the trial, Gogoi denied making any such statement, even though similar content was aired by few news channels too. "Unauthenticated quotes or betrayal of sources may put the scribes in troubles and it should be our moral responsibility to crosscheck the facts before reporting. We must understand that more people may want to use media space for selfish interests, but it should be our priority to proceed with the wisdom only," concluded the JFA statement.

# Kidambi Srikanth digs deep to enter the second final at Yonex-Sunrise India Open Ratchanok Intanon one win away from the third title

From A Correspondent New Delhi, March 31,

Kidambi Srikanth remained on course for a second title by entering the final of the Yonex-Sunrise India Open 2019, a BWF World Tour Super 500 tournament, here on Saturday. The 2015 champion was made to work hard by the 30th ranked Huang Yuxiang before he could pull off a gritty 16-21, 21-14, 21-19 win in 1 hour 4 minutes. This is Srikanth's first final on the BWF circuit since the French Open in October of 2017. The former winner was troubled early on by Yuxiang's speed, quick change of direction and superior net play, despite having a 3-1 edge in their head-to-head record. From 14-14, the Chinese went up to 19-14 due to unforced errors from the home hope. Srikanth did save a couple of game points but his effort fell short as Yuxiang wrapped up the opener 21-16. Amid deafening cheers from the crowd, the World No. 7 started showing flashes of his aggression in the early part of the second game and built a 7-4 lead. By regularly finding the lines, the India No. 1 held on to go up to 13-6 and kept up the same approach to close out the second game 21-14. Srikanth broke away from a deadlock in the third



game to inch ahead to 11-10 but errors at the net proved costly as Yuxiang grabbed 3 points on the trot to go up to 13-11. The former World No. 1 then found his firepower from a 14-17 deficit to draw level at 18-18 and then a beautiful touch at the net helped him finish the win. "I gave too many easy points after that 11-point break in the third set. In the end, I was just thinking I was playing safe and working hard for every point," said

Srikanth after the victory. "Even yesterday, I lost the first set. I have not been able to pull out the first sets but really happy I was able to pull out third sets," added the top-ranked Indian. Intanon back in the final after 3 years Thailand's former world champion Ratchanok Intanon survived a tough duel with the seventh seed Han Yue, eking out a 21-15, 19-21, 21-18 win in 1 hour 6 minutes. For the highly popular Thai, this is her fourth final at

this prestigious tournament after earlier wins in 2013 and 2016. Her only loss came in 2015 against Saina Nehwal. The women's doubles section witnessed a mini-upset as the third seeds Chow Mei Kuan and Lee Meng Yeon beat the second seeds Jongkolphan Kittharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai 18-21, 21-19, 21-19. They will take on the top seeds Greysia Polii and Apriyani Rahayu who needed three games to set off compatriots Della Destiana Haris and Tania Oktaviani Kusumah 21-9, 19-21, 21-5. In mixed doubles, the top seeds Wang Yilyu and Huang Dongping set up a summit clash with fifth seeds Praveen Jordan and Melati Daeva Oktavianti. The Chinese, winners of the BWF World Tour Finals title last year, beat fourth seeds Hafiz Faizal and Gloria Emanuelle Widjaja 21-13, 21-16 while the Indonesians prevailed over Lee Yang and Yang Ching Tun 21-9, 23-21.

**Key Results:**  
**Men's Singles**  
 KIDAMBI Srikanth (IND) (3) bt HUANG Yuxiang (CHN) 16-21, 21-14, 21-19  
**Women's Singles**  
 INTANON Ratchanok (THA) (4) bt HAN Yue (CHN) (7) 21-15, 19-21, 21-18  
**Women's Doubles**  
 CHOW/LEE (MAS) (3) bt KITTHARAKUL/PRAJONGJAI (THA) (2) 18-21, 21-19, 21-19  
 POLLI/RAHAYU (INA) (1) bt HANIS/KUSUMAH (INA) 21-9, 19-21, 21-5  
**Mixed Doubles**  
 WANG/HUANG (CHN) (1) bt FAIZAL/WIDJAJA (INA) (4) 21-13, 21-16  
 JORDAN/OKTAVIANI (INA) (5) bt LEE/YANG (TPE) 21-9, 23-21

## PEACE CRAFTS EXHIBITION

Date : 27<sup>th</sup> March to 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2019  
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### Name changed

I, the undersigned, **Yasar Arafat**, a residence of Laiphang Mamang Leikai, do hereby declare that my daughter's name has been changed to **Humerah Bint Arafat** and that she has renounced, relinquished and abandoned the use of her old name **Humerah**.

Sd/-  
**Yasar Arafat**

### Name changed

I, the undersigned, **Yasar Arafat**, a residence of Laiphang Mamang Leikai, do hereby declare that my son's name has been changed to **Abdullah Bin Arafat** and that he has renounced, relinquished and abandoned the use of her old name **Abdullah**.

Sd/-  
**Yasar Arafat**