

AGP waits for an opportunity



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 agp_810052801.jpg As the Indo-US nuclear deal finally puts the United

Progressive Alliance government on test, many small and regional political parties of the country start gaining unexpected importance. The main opposition party of Assam, Asom Gana Parishad too emerges as a factor in the recent developments, where the Indian National Congress party led government now has to pass through the vote of confidence motion in the Parliament during the fourth week of July.

The crisis surfaced after the Left allies of the UPA withdrew their support to the Union government in New Delhi alleging that the nuclear deal was not in the country's interest. But the Congress and more significantly the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh maintained that the deal was in favour of India.

The President of India has already convened a special session of Lok Sabha (the Lower House of Indian Parliament) starting on July 21. The UPA government has decided to seek the vote of trust from the Parliamentarians during the session as the opposition and Left parties (CPI, CPM, RSP, FB) continued claiming that the government slipped into a minority after the withdrawal of support from the Communist

allies as well as the Ms. Mayawati led Bahujan Samaj Party. If no Parliamentarian of the 543-member House walkout on the crucial day, the government (latest UPA strength 226) should receive the support from at least 272 members in the trial of strength.

The UPA chief Sonia Gandhi has already received the message of support from the Samajwadi Party led by Mualayam Singh Yadav (they have 39 MPs in Lok Sabha). Now the ruling Congress is looking for small political parties around the country, whom they can convince for support on the need of the hour.

The Northeast region of the country has thus emerged as a ground of search for the Congress. The alienated region has altogether 25 MPs representing different political parties from eight states. Assam has the highest number of Parliamentarians (14) in Lok Sabha, followed by Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh (2 each) and Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim (1 each). Of course, Congress has the maximum of 11 Lok Sabha members in the region.

Even with two members in Lok Sabha, the AGP has received significant visibility in the national political arena. The party, which enjoys impressive support bases in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam, has already decided to go against the central government during the confidence motion in the Parliament. The AGP chief Brindaban Goswami declared that they were against the Congress led government in New Delhi not only for the nuclear deal, but also for soaring price rises of essential commodities that put the people in enormous troubles.

Born after the culmination of historic Assam Agitation (against the illegal Bangladeshi in the state, where hundreds of Assamese youths sacrificed their lives) during 1984, AGP was however losing its significance among the people of Assam in the last few years. After

sitting on power for two times at Dispur, AGP showed poor result in the last two Assembly polls to pave away for the Congress to form the government successively for two times.

Even as a responsible opposition party, AGP has failed to convince the indigenous people of the state, its primary vote-banks, that it would continue working (or will be capable of doing so) for their interest and safeguards. Divided in various factions and the lack of leadership qualities among its office bearers and the confusing approach towards many burning issues of the region have left the party (of Asomiya people) in a mess.

Initially AGP looked optimistic while lobbying with the United National Progressive Alliance (emerged as the Third Front) to go against the Congress government. But soon after the Samajwadi Party's decision to go with the UPA government, the UNPA slipped into troubles. The SP has the highest number of MPs among the UNPA parties and hence their absence would only weaken the front and it might have frustrated the other parties of the group namely Telugu Desam Party, Indian National Lok Dal, National Conference and Asom Gana Parishad. The UNPA attracted media attention months back while declaring that they would maintain equidistance from both the Congress and the Bhartiya Janata Party.

The recent development may also lead the AGP leaders for a probable alliance with the BJP. The AGP leaders in earlier occasions declared that they were interested to have a common platform against the Congress in Assam and they would not mind if the BJP too being a partner.

In fact, the AGP leaders had a series of discussions with the BJP heavy weights like Rajnath Singh and Sushma Swaraja regarding electoral alliance for the forthcoming national polls. Both the parties, unanimous

in regards to illegal Bangladeshi in Assam, fought the 2004 general election separately and won two seats each.

But for the time being, AGP has nothing to loose much, as they themselves are suspicious about their success in the polls. So, like many other regional political parties of the country, it remains a 'wait & watch' and grab the opportunity situation for AGP too.

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