

Assam regional parties re-unification hits roadblock

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU), the state's apex student group, has put a spanner in the process of unification of the beleaguered regional political parties in the state by saying former chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta must be kept out of the move, AASU leaders said Saturday.

The AASU has sought to make its views known at a time when regional party leaders are engaged in the process of trying to unite the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), the state's main opposition party, and the breakaway faction called the AGP (Progressive), headed by Mahanta.

'We are in favour of a unity among the regional forces in the state, but a traitor like (Prafulla) Mahanta must be kept out of the new unified party that may emerge,' AASU adviser Samujjal Bhattacharjee told IANS.

AASU's stand has evoked mixed response mainly because the students' body calls itself non-political.

Many leaders say AASU has no business interfering in political matters.

Mahanta, a former AASU president and a protagonist of the anti-foreigner uprising of the eighties, has drawn the ire of AASU for his alleged failure in implementing the 1985 Assam Accord and ridding the state of illegal Bangladeshi migrants during his two terms as chief minister.

Besides, Mahanta also got embroiled in the controversy surrounding the mysterious killings of relatives of members of the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) that came to be called 'secret killings'.

A commission of enquiry instituted by the Congress government indicted Mahanta who was chief minister during the time most such killings took place. The commission's report was placed in the state assembly last November.

A panel to go into the question of unification constituted up by the AGP is set to have a crucial meeting May 5.

The move to bring about unification among the regional parties, particularly the AGP and Mahanta's AGP (Progressive), has gathered steam perhaps due to the realisation that a fragmented opposition won't be able to fight the ruling Congress at the coming Lok Sabha polls.

The Congress won the assembly polls back to back, in 2001 and 2006, making the AGP sit up and wonder about its strategy to effect a change in Assam.

The AGP has set its eyes on the coming Lok Sabha polls as well as the next assembly elections in 2011. Therefore, it could well be possible that the AGP will welcome Mahanta back into its fold, purely for electoral exigencies, ignoring all attempts to keep him out.

(© IANS / India eNews)