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- ❖ **EU after the Brexit**
- ❖ **EU/Europe Quo Vadis**
- ❖ **Great Leap Forward**
- ❖ **Dalits' Development in India**
- ❖ **Death Penalty and Human Rights**
- ❖ **Sustainable Urban Development**



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### Wither Opposition!

The recent demonetization move by the NDA government provided a golden opportunity for the non-BJP Opposition parties, including the Congress, to put a united front against the Modi government and mobilize mass support. In Rajya Sabha, the Opposition unity was visible in attacking the Modi government on its demonetization drive and NDA ally Shiv Sena participating in the protest march to Rashtrapati Bhawan. However, on ground zero, the Opposition gave a semblance of disunity when a call for Bharat bandh was given. The BJP is drawing comfort from the apparent ‘disunity’ in the Opposition parties and the fact that their criticism has largely been regarding the implementation of the demonetization drive.

It is interesting to note that AAP, Trinamool Congress (TMC), National Congress, JD (U), Congress, Left parties, BSP, SP and some other opposition parties put up a ‘united’ show in the Rajya Sabha in opposing demonetization move and insisted on Prime Minister Modi’s presence in the House to participate in the debate. On the one hand, ruling NDA’s ally Shiv Sena marching along with AAP, Trinamool Congress and National Conference to Rashtrapati Bhawan the other day was ‘bad optics’ for the BJP, while on the other hand, the Congress, Left and BSP kept away from the show perhaps indicating that these parties were disinclined to see TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee assuming centre stage.

Undoubtedly, the TMC supremo is now attempting to ally with different regional leaders like National Conference’s Omar Abdullah, AAP’s Kejriwal and JD (U)’s Nitish Kumar, even while trying to keep the Congress high command on board to galvanize opposition unity against the Modi government; nevertheless, other regional parties like BSP, AIADMK and BJD are reluctant to reckon her. Mamata’s contemplated move of a Bharat Yatra to mobilise support against the Modi government from November 24 has few takers. The TMC supremo’s bid to forge an all-India “anti-Modi” movement by uniting all opposition parties on the plea that ‘opposition disunity’ benefits Modi is unlikely to find favour with the Congress and other powerful regional satraps in view of the impending assembly elections. It is ‘uncomfortable’ for the AAP to be seen with the Congress in the wake of AAP’s main opposition in Punjab and Delhi being the Congress, and it is difficult for AAP to put aside those differences and join hands. Meanwhile, the latent division in the opposition rank came to the fore after about a fortnight of rare unity among the opposition parties including the Congress, the Left parties and the Trinamool Congress came over the demonetization move of the government enforced since mid-night of November 8.

On November 28, a few opposition parties gave a call for protest or a Bharat Bandh in the name of Akrosh Diwas, Congress did not take any call on or for a Bharat Bandh. While the Left parties, including the CPI (M) and CPI, had called a 12-hour bandh to protest against ban on old high-value currency notes, Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress has said it was not in favour of any bandh. Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati said her party is not part of any Bharat Bandh and her party is against black money. However, she flayed the government for not implementing the demonetization scheme effectively resulting in inconveniences for the people.

The traditional Left parties in the country, including the socialists and communists, are on the wane and they alone cannot fight the BJP. The Left parties can forge electoral adjustments with the Congress in the next parliamentary elections because the Congress Party that secured one-fifth of the total votes, polled in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, cannot be wished away when forming an anti-BJP front. Undoubtedly, the Left crafted electoral adjustments with the Congress in West Bengal; nonetheless, the alliance in Bengal was lukewarm and unenthusiastic and the masses did not trust it. The Left also should understand that in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan there is no democratic alternative except the Congress to fight the BJP.

The Mahagathbandhan in Bihar proved highly successful and it needs to be replicated at the national level by forging an electoral alliance with Congress, Left parties, JD (U), SP/BSP, TMC and other like-minded non-BJP parties to provide an effective alternative to the BJP. Otherwise, it could be an existential crisis for the Opposition.

— BK