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PERSPECTIVE
Friendship is built on acceptance, forgiveness and shared imperfections.

Dispur Ticket Row: BJP Leader Jayanta Kumar Das Quits Party After Snub

GUWAHATI



In a setback for the Bharatiya Janata Party in Assam ahead of the Assembly elections, senior leader Jayanta Kumar Das has resigned from the party after being denied a ticket from the Dispur constituency.

Das stepped down from all positions, including his primary membership of the Assam Pradesh unit, citing "personal inconveniences" in his resignation letter dated March 20. He said his decision would take immediate effect, relinquishing all responsibilities and privileges associated with the party.

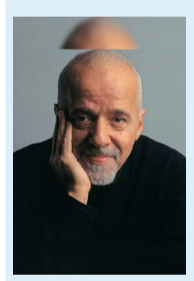
The resignation follows a day of visible discontent, with Das on March 19 expressing dissatisfaction over not being considered for the Dispur seat - a constituency he was reportedly eyeing for the upcoming polls.

The party has instead fielded Pradyut Bordoloi, who recently joined the BJP after switching from the Indian National Congress, triggering resentment among some local leaders.

"I hereby tender my resignation from all positions including primary membership of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Assam Pradesh, Assam," Das wrote, confirming his complete dissociation from the party.

The development underscores signs of internal unease within the BJP's state unit as it finalises candidates and strategies for the high-stakes Assam Assembly elections.

WHO SAID WHAT



"People never learn anything by being told, they have to find out for themselves." ~ Paulo Coelho

Cachar BJP 'United', Says Kaushik Rai Amid Ticket Row

SILCHAR

Amid murmurs of dissent following the announcement of candidates for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections, senior BJP leader and Cabinet Minister Kaushik Rai has dismissed reports of infighting within the party in Cachar district, asserting that the organisation remains united and focused on electoral victory.

Addressing concerns over denial of tickets to several leaders-including sitting MLAs Dipayan Chakraborty, Mihir Kanti Shome, and Nihar Ranjan Das-Rai maintained that internal differences were being addressed through dialogue and would be resolved soon.

"I am in regular communication with those who could



not secure tickets. We are hopeful that any difficulties or differences will be sorted out shortly, and the BJP will contest with full strength to ensure victory across the district," Rai said, downplaying speculation of unrest within the party ranks.

However, the developments surrounding Das have added a new dimension to the situation. Within hours of the candidate list being announced on Thursday, Das resigned from the BJP and is now reportedly preparing to contest as an independent candidate from the Dholai constituency.

Despite this, Rai reiterated that such developments should not be seen as indicative of a larger rift, expressing confidence that the party's organisational cohesion

would hold as the election approaches.

The minister also expressed gratitude to the BJP's central and state leadership for reposing faith in him. He confirmed that he would once again contest from the Lakhimpur constituency on a BJP ticket, and voiced confidence that the party would retain its stronghold across the Barak Valley region.

The episode highlights the delicate balancing act within political parties during candidate selection, where local aspirations often collide with broader electoral strategies. While the BJP leadership projects unity, the coming days will be crucial in determining how effectively it manages dissent and consolidates support ahead of the high-stakes Assembly polls.

Dues Dispute Targets BJP's Rajdeep Roy, Event Body Calls Boycott



SILCHAR

As election momentum builds in Assam, BJP's Silchar candidate Dr Rajdeep Roy has come under scrutiny after a local event decorators' body announced a boycott over alleged long-pending dues.

The Event Decorators Welfare Association, Cachar District Committee, has suspended all event-related services for Roy during the ongoing election period, citing unpaid bills stretching back several years. The decision was communicated through

an official letter dated March 20, 2026, addressed to the BJP's Cachar district leadership.

In the letter, the association stated that its members would refrain from undertaking any work for Roy until the outstanding payments are cleared in full. It also urged the party to intervene and facilitate an early settlement of the dues.

Association president Joy Barida told Barak Bulletin that the payments have allegedly been pending since 2018. He linked the dues to services rendered during the inauguration of the Jeevan Jyoti Institute of Medical Sciences, a private hospital owned by Roy.

Backing the claims, association secretary Deepjoy Roy said multiple payments have remained unsettled since Roy's tenure as Member of Parliament. While he declined to specify the total amount, citing the involvement of multiple stakeholders, he confirmed that the association would boycott all campaign-related events connected to Roy.

However, he noted that an exception would be made for Roy's nomination event scheduled on March 23, following a request from the BJP Cachar District Committee and its general secretary Amitabh Rai.

Sources familiar with the matter indicated that the outstanding dues could exceed Rs 1 crore, accumulated over the past seven to eight years.

Dr Rajdeep Roy represented Silchar in the Lok Sabha from 2019 to 2024 and is now the BJP's candidate for the Silchar Legislative Assembly Constituency in the Assam Assembly elections slated for April 9, 2026.

NEIFF 2026 Kicks Off in Imphal, Showcasing Films from Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya

IMPHAL

The 3rd North East India Film Festival (NEIFF) 2026 commenced on Saturday at Tanthapoli Cinema in Lamphel, highlighting cinematic works from across the region with participation from three northeastern states.

A total of nine films - including entries from Assam, Manipur, and Meghalaya - are being showcased at the two-day festival, which will conclude on Sunday.

The festival was inaugurated by Paomam Gunindro, Vice Chancellor of the Manipur University of Culture. It is jointly organised by THOUNA, the Department of Information and Public Relations, Government of Manipur, and the All Manipur Film Producers Association, with support from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

On the opening day, films such as The Check Post by Mahesh Kongsam, Ha Lyngkha Bneng by Pradip Kurbah, Romantic Affairs by Monjul Baruah, and Laininghan Naoria Phullo by Rakesh Moirangthem were screened.

The festival features both feature and non-feature films, with a diverse lineup that includes Collage, Kangbo Aloti, Noi Kotha, Toy Gun, Phouoibee, among others, reflecting the region's storytelling traditions and contemporary themes.

A total of eight awards will be presented, each carrying a citation, statuette, and cash prize. The categories include Best Feature Film, Best Non-Feature Film, Best Director (Feature Film), Best Cinematography, Best Editing, Best Sound, Best Screenplay (Feature Film), and the Jury Award. A Special Mention may also be conferred at the discretion of the jury.

Manipur Tensions: Fresh Firing Leaves Two Civilians Critical in Ukhrul-Kangpokpi Fringe



IMPHAL

Fresh incidents of firing along the Ukhrul-Kangpokpi fringe in Manipur have left two civilians critically injured, heightening tensions in the already volatile region, officials and local bodies said.

According to statements issued by the Ihang-Bungpi Working Committee and the Kuki CSO Working Committee (Ukhrul), suspected Tangkhul militants allegedly opened fire in two separate incidents on Saturday - first in the early hours at Shangkai village, followed by another attack along the Lep-ten-Tingpibung road.

The more serious incident occurred around 9:30 a.m., when an auto-rickshaw travelling between Tingpibung and Lep-ten villages reportedly came under automatic gunfire from the direction of Sanakeithel. The vehicle was hit while in motion and subsequently crashed, injuring two occupants. Among them, a woman sustained a gunshot wound to her waist. Both victims are reported to be in critical condition, with further updates awaited from medical authorities.

Earlier, at around 5:15 a.m.,

suspected militants allegedly fired three to four rounds towards Shangkai village, triggering panic among residents. No casualties were reported in that incident.

The Ihang-Bungpi Working Committee termed the 9:30 a.m. attack a deliberate assault on unarmed civilians and raised concerns over the alleged inaction of personnel from the 4th Mahar Regiment stationed at Sinakeithel during the incident. It questioned the lack of intervention and described it as a serious dereliction of duty.

The committee has called for immediate countermeasures against militant groups operating from the Sinakeithel area, a formal inquiry into the alleged operational lapse, dismantling of unauthorised bunkers along civilian routes, and measures to ensure safe passage for commuters on the Lep-ten-Tingpibung road. It warned that failure to act within 48 hours would be viewed seriously.

Meanwhile, the Kuki CSO Working Committee (Ukhrul) condemned the attacks, noting that they occurred at a time when the community was already mourning recent deaths. The group said it had extended cooperation to authorities and lifted a shutdown on March 20 following assurances from officials.

It urged the administration to identify those responsible and take swift legal action to prevent further escalation in the region, where ethnic tensions have persisted since violence broke out in 2023.

Rain Clouds Over Poll Battle: IMD Forecast of Wet Fortnight May Disrupt Assam Campaigns

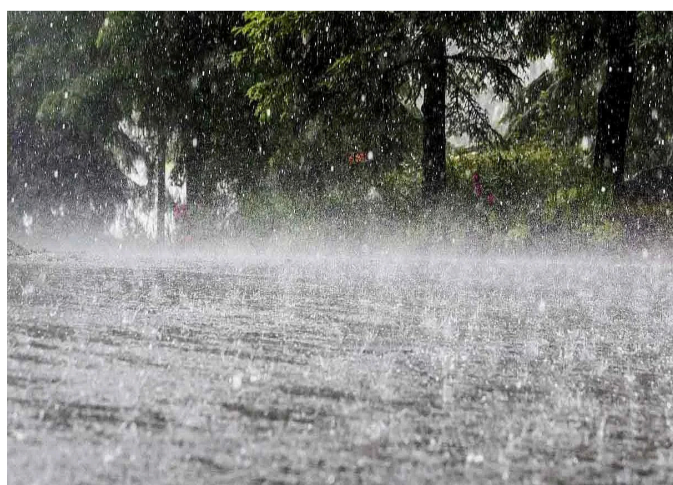
GUWAHATI

With the Assam Assembly election campaign entering a crucial phase, an extended spell of rain and thunderstorms forecast across the state is set to pose fresh logistical challenges for political parties.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the Northeast is likely to witness above-normal rainfall over the next two weeks, raising concerns over potential disruptions to rallies, roadshows, and outdoor campaign events.

The weather office, in its latest outlook issued on March 19, predicted "scattered to fairly widespread light to moderate rainfall accompanied by gusty winds reaching 30-50 kmph" across the region, along with the possibility of thunderstorms and lightning over the coming days.

The forecast further indicates that wet conditions will persist into the final leg of cam-



aigning. "Fairly widespread to widespread light to moderate rainfall is likely to continue over Northeast India during the week from March 26 to April 1," the IMD said, adding that rainfall activity may not completely subside even after that period.

Meteorologists have attributed the prolonged wet spell to favourable atmospheric conditions and strong moisture incursion from the Bay of Bengal, suggesting that much of Assam is likely to experience intermittent rainfall until early April.

Recent data underscores the intensity of the ongoing weather pattern. Rainfall across East and Northeast India last week was recorded at 267 per cent above normal, while cumulative rainfall since March 1 stands at 73 per cent excess. Assam alone received 98.6 mm rainfall between March 1 and 19, significantly higher than the normal of 30 mm.

The impact has been widespread, with most districts reporting "excess" to "largely excess" rainfall. In Kamrup Metro, rainfall reached 56.1 mm against a normal of 15.3 mm for the period. Notably, Guwahati recorded 33.7 mm rainfall on March 16-ranking among the highest 24-hour March rainfall figures since 1951.

The forecast comes at a time when electioneering is intensifying across the state. With polling scheduled for April 9 and campaigning set to conclude on April 7, political par-

ties are gearing up for an aggressive outreach push.

Several high-profile leaders, including Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, are expected to address rallies in the coming days, while Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has reportedly planned multiple campaign events daily.

However, the looming threat of inclement weather could force parties to recalibrate their strategies, shifting focus toward smaller indoor gatherings or digital outreach to maintain campaign momentum.

The Opposition, particularly the Congress, has already been critical of the relatively short campaign window announced by the Election Commission. The forecast of persistent rainfall now adds another layer of complexity, potentially constraining campaign mobility and voter engagement during the decisive final stretch.

Guwahati Airport's New Terminal 2 Raises Capacity to 13.1 Million Passengers Annually

GUWAHATI

The commissioning of Terminal 2 at Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport has significantly enhanced passenger handling capacity, taking the airport's annual throughput to 13.1 million and reinforcing its role as the primary aviation hub of the Northeast. Domestic flight operations at the newly inaugurated terminal began on February 22, marking a major infrastructure upgrade aimed at addressing rising air traffic demand and improving regional connectivity.

Five domestic carriers - SpiceJet, Alliance Air, Air India Express, Air India, and Akasa Air - have shifted their operations to Terminal 2. Meanwhile, IndiGo and international flight services continue to operate from Terminal 1 and are expected to transition in phases.

The new terminal is equipped with advanced technology-driven systems to streamline passenger

movement, including DigiYatra-enabled e-gates, self-bag drop counters, full-body scanners, and an automated baggage handling system. Additional features such as parking-area check-in facilities and an expanded arrival forecourt are aimed at reducing congestion and improving overall efficiency.

Designed to reflect Assam's cultural and natural heritage, the terminal incorporates bamboo-inspired interiors, orchid-themed columns, and motifs based on the traditional Assamese japi. A unique "Sky Forest" arrival zone featuring over 100,000 native plants has also been developed to enhance the passenger experience. Developed by Adani Airport Holdings Limited, the terminal is part of a broader push to strengthen aviation infrastructure in high-growth regions. The expanded capacity is expected to further boost tourism and economic activity while improving connectivity between the Northeast and the rest of India.



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LPG SUPPLY CHAOS



The cooking gas scarcity has exposed how quickly a well-functioning supply system can descend into chaos when panic, misinformation and weak field-level monitoring combine. Despite the number of LPG connections more than doubling over the past decade, households had become accustomed to a dependable supply mechanism. However, this equilibrium was suddenly disturbed by the geopolitical tensions. India heavily relies on imports to meet its energy needs, and speculative narratives about potential disruptions have created a wave of anxiety among consumers. Even before any real disruption could be felt in the supply chain, the fear of shortage triggered an unprecedented rush to secure refills. This surge in demand was not gradual but sudden and manifold. The system, designed to handle a steady stream of bookings, struggled to cope with this sudden surge. The situation worsened when several retail gas agencies reportedly halted home deliveries, forcing consumers to visit distribution points themselves. What followed was a familiar but unfortunate scene: long queues outside gas agencies, desperate customers waiting for hours, and uncertainty over whether refills would be available at all.

For many households dependent on a single LPG cylinder, the situation quickly became distressing. Elderly persons, women and even school-going children were seen carrying empty cylinders in the hope of securing a refill. Yet for several days, many returned home empty-handed. The disruption also exposed deeper systemic vulnerabilities. Commercial establishments were forced to seek alternative fuels, while others faced the prospect of temporarily shutting down operations. In such circumstances, allegations of black marketing and diversion of domestic cylinders inevitably surfaced. Reports suggested that some commercial establishments were using domestic cylinders or refilling commercial cylinders through unofficial channels. What made the crisis particularly perplexing was the disconnect between official statements and ground realities. Oil companies repeatedly asserted that adequate stocks of LPG were available. While that may have been technically correct at storage points, availability at the consumer level told a different story. Supply chains do not function merely through stock availability; they depend on effective distribution, monitoring and last-mile delivery.

In fact, the LPG distribution network already includes mechanisms for monitoring. Each gas booking is recorded digitally, and field officers appointed by major oil marketing companies—Indian Oil, HPCL, and BPCL—can monitor bookings and deliveries in real-time. Yet during the peak of the crisis, there was little visible intervention from these supervisory structures. The absence of proactive field-level oversight allowed confusion to grow and created fertile ground for hoarding, diversion and irregular practices. It was only after significant public outcry that the District Administration in Jammu took decisive action. The administration started conducting surprise checks. These inspections reportedly uncovered several discrepancies in distribution practices. Following this intervention, home delivery services are restored, which may bring some relief to consumers. While the situation may stabilise in parts of Jammu, the larger question remains: could the crisis have been prevented through earlier intervention? The answer appears to be yes. Timely monitoring of booking patterns, strict enforcement of delivery protocols and immediate correction of irregularities might have prevented panic from escalating into a full-blown supply disruption.

The Kashmir division, fortunately, appears relatively better positioned for the moment. Due to winter preparedness measures, storage facilities there still hold comfortable reserves. Nevertheless, the coming weeks will test the system further. The twin festivals of Eid and Navratra typically see higher household consumption. At the same time, the tourist season has already begun, which will sharply increase demand for commercial LPG in hotels and restaurants. In such circumstances, administrative vigilance must extend beyond meetings and presentations. District administrations should begin receiving daily reports from LPG companies detailing bookings, deliveries and pending orders. Ensuring a strict first-come, first-served system would restore fairness and transparency. Equally important is publishing the contact details of oil company field officers so that consumers can report irregularities directly.

Ultimately, restoring normalcy requires co-ordinated action. Gas companies must strengthen oversight of their distributors, district administrations must enforce regulations firmly, and consumers must avoid panic-driven hoarding. The quicker the system becomes transparent, responsive and strictly monitored, the easier it will be to ensure that such disruptions do not recur.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Time is more value than money. You can get more money, but you cannot get more time.” - Jim Rohn

THE ECONOMIC LOGIC BEHIND PAKISTAN'S CONTINUED HOSTILITY



K M CHANDRASEKHAR

This Monday's bombardment of a rehabilitation centre in Kabul, which killed more than 400 people, is the latest confirmation of the fact that the *raison d'être* of the Pakistan army is to wage war—across its borders and within. Within a year, it has fought Afghans to the west, the Baloch people within, and Indians to the east. But its history of friction with India illustrates this in the sharpest manner possible.

Both Atal Behari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh sincerely wanted to break the cycle of hostility and violence that characterised India-Pakistan relations. The 1999 Lahore bus trip, when Prime Minister Vajpayee travelled on the first Delhi-Lahore bus service to meet his counterpart, Nawaz Sharif, was an overt overture to bury the hatchet. The Agra Summit of 2001 and the 'Srinagar handshake' of 2003, during which he extended his hand of friendship once more to Pakistan, despite the Kargil incursion in 1999 and the attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001, were generous attempts to strike new ground.

Manmohan Singh, too, believed in a paradigm shift in our relationship with Pakistan and in finding an administrative solution to the Kashmir issue. Speaking in Amritsar in 2006, he said, "Borders cannot be redrawn, but we can work towards making them irrelevant—towards making them just lines on a map. People on both sides of the Line of Control should be able to move more freely and trade with one another."

He established a backchannel of diplomacy with Ambassador Satinder Lamba on the Indian side speaking with Pervez Musharraf's confidant Tariq Aziz. The rough contours of greater understanding were taking shape, involving a more porous border for free trade, a joint consultative mechanism, phased demilitarisation and greater self-governance in Kashmir on both sides of the border. Confidence-building was the name of the game. As cabinet secretary, I too was involved in part, trying to oil the wheels of trade by speeding it up through faster customs facilitation and removing bottlenecks in train movements.

Then, with devastating effect, 26/11 struck. Just as the Kargil conflict had followed the Lahore bus diplomacy, the attack on the Indian Parliament had followed the Agra Summit. When Narendra Modi became Prime Minister, he too endeavoured to build a new edifice of peace with Pakistan. He invited Nawaz Sharif to his swearing-in ceremony, which the latter accepted. He met Sharif on the sidelines of two international meetings, and, most surprisingly of all, broke diplomatic protocol by flying to Pakistan on Christmas Day of 2015 to attend Nawaz Sharif's 66th birthday and celebration of his granddaughter's

wedding at Raiwind, an unscheduled visit on his way back from official visits to Russia and Afghanistan. In a couple of weeks, the response came: vicious attacks on our air force base at Pathankot and on our army base at Uri.

The pattern is telling, even predictable—attempts to make peace, followed immediately by violence emanating from Pakistan. I recall from my days in the commerce ministry that, for years on end, we did not file a dispute against Pakistan for failing to extend the most favoured nation treatment to us, as they were required to under World Trade Organization rules. The effort was always to handle them with kid gloves in the hope that someday they would come to the negotiating table with us. A fond hope that is receding by the day as Trump cosies up to the Pakistan army.

Why is it so hard to make peace with Pakistan? Why does every attempt at peace lead to military or terrorist actions from their side?

Ayesha Siddiq's 2007 book, *Military Inc: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*, explains this well. She shows that the Pakistani army is not funded by the State and does not answer to Parliament. Instead, it is a self-financing economic behemoth that works outside normal financial controls. Through military welfare foundations such as Fauji, Shaheen, Bahria and the Army Welfare Trust, the armed forces operate banks, insurance companies, universities, bakeries, cement plants and private security firms. The Army Welfare Trust owns Askari Bank and Askari General Insurance Company.

Different branches of the military operate institutes of higher education including the National University of Sciences and Technology, Foundation University,

Bahria University and Air University. Fauji Cereals and Fauji Foods are in the food business, and the Canteen Stores Department runs a large retail chain across the country. There is also Fauji Cement Company and security firms like Askari Guards and Fauji Security Services.

The businesses generate huge profits that are ploughed into real estate, spearheaded by the Defence Housing Authority, allotting large tracts of urban and agricultural land to retiring military personnel. The growth of the Pakistani military economy also stifled private initiative, as the military obtained huge concessions through tax exemptions, State monopolies and contractual preferences. Even foreign investment has to cope with military dominance. The special Investment Facilitation Council, formed in 2023, is co-chaired by the Prime Minister and the Chief of Army Staff.

Much of the Pakistani military's growth as a major economic entity was made possible by generous US aid during the Cold War, especially during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and, later, after 9/11. The rise of military business, or "milbus" as Siddiq calls it, has led to the creation of militant groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, created primarily to inflict a "thousand cuts" on India, although the Tehreek-e-Taliban has now emerged to torment Pakistan itself.

In the final analysis, India cannot deal with Pakistan as it is ruled by the army, notwithstanding the fiction of an elected government. It's escalating the ongoing conflict with Afghanistan, as Monday's strike showed. And continues its bel-

ligerent actions in Balochistan under foreign protection.

Without continued hostility, the Pakistan army cannot maintain its comforts. Nor can it allow true democracy to develop. Hence, peace in the region is a distant dream, particularly since a puerile American President thinks he can break into India's market for agricultural products indirectly by fostering ties with the Pakistan army.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

I want to convey a message to the Income Tax Department. You're not just tax collectors. You're the face of the government's relationship with the taxpayer. Since you're the face of the government's relationship with the taxpayer, this new law gives you a clearer and leaner framework to make it simple, to make it simpler for people who want to understand it better. It must be administered with empathy, fairness and efficiency. I expect every officer to internalise the spirit of this new law. The taxpayer is not your adversary. The taxpayer is your partner in nation building.

- Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Finance Minister



Congress Expands Assam Poll Line-Up, Seals Key Alliance with Rajjor Dal Amid Seat-Sharing Tensions

GUWAHATI

The Indian National Congress has stepped up its electoral preparations for the 2026 Assam Assembly elections, releasing its fourth list of candidates while finalising a crucial and long-awaited seat-sharing agreement with ally Rajjor Dal. The twin announcements mark a significant moment in the Opposition's campaign strategy, reflecting both consolidation and compromise as parties attempt to present a united front against the ruling alliance.

With the fourth list, the Congress has named candidates for seven additional constituencies, taking its total tally to 92 nominees so far. The list, cleared by the party's Central Election Committee, underscores the party's effort to steadily build momentum through phased announcements, balancing regional representation, caste equations, and winnability factors.

Among the most closely watched deci-

sions in the latest list is the nomination of Bidisha Neog from Jalukbari (37), a constituency widely regarded as a bastion of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Sarma has held the seat since 2001, making it one of the BJP's most secure strongholds in the state.

By fielding Neog from Jalukbari, the Congress has signalled its intent to mount a symbolic as well as strategic challenge in high-profile constituencies. While the odds may be steep, such contests are often aimed at energising party workers, shaping public narrative, and forcing the ruling party to defend its turf more aggressively.

Neog, reacting to her candidature, expressed gratitude to the party leadership and described her nomination as an opportunity to "lead and transform" the constituency. Her candidacy is expected to draw significant attention during the campaign, particularly given the political weight as-

sociated with Jalukbari. The fourth list reflects a diverse spread of candidates across constituencies, indicating the Congress's attempt to maintain a balance between regions and communities. The newly announced candidates include Rohit Pariga from Tangla, Jayanta Borah from Biswanath, Dr Joy Prakash Das from Nao-boicha (SC), Gyandip Mohan from Mahmo-ra, Pran Kurmi from Titabor, and Rahul Roy from Hailakandi. These selections highlight the party's focus on constituencies where it believes it can either consolidate its base or mount a credible challenge. The inclusion of candidates from Upper Assam, Lower Assam, and Barak Valley also demonstrates a deliberate attempt to ensure statewide representation.

Perhaps more politically significant than the candidate list itself is the Congress's agreement with Rajjor Dal, led by Akhil Gogoi. After weeks of protracted ne-

gotiations and intermittent tensions, the two parties have finally reached a consensus on seat-sharing.

Under the agreement, 11 constituencies have been allocated to Rajjor Dal, marking a major step toward Opposition unity in the state. The deal is expected to help avoid vote-splitting in key constituencies, thereby strengthening the collective challenge against the BJP-led alliance. The inclusion of Dhing in Rajjor Dal's quota is particularly noteworthy. The constituency had emerged as a major sticking point during negotiations, with both Congress and Rajjor Dal initially unwilling to concede ground. Its eventual allocation reflects the compromises necessary to sustain coalition politics.

In addition, the two parties have designated Goalpara East and Gauripur as "friendly contest" seats, where both will field candidates. This flexible arrangement

indicates that while the alliance is largely intact, certain constituencies remain open to competitive engagement between partners.

Despite the breakthrough, the seat-sharing arrangement has not been without friction. Protests by Congress workers in Dalgaon against the decision to allocate the seat to Rajjor Dal highlighted the challenges inherent in coalition-building.

Such dissent is not uncommon in pre-election alliances, where local leaders and party workers often feel sidelined in favour of broader strategic considerations. The Dalgaon episode underscores the delicate balancing act that party leadership must perform-reconciling grassroots aspirations with the imperatives of alliance politics.

Managing these internal tensions will be critical for the Congress as it moves deeper into the campaign. Any prolonged

dissatisfaction at the local level could impact organisational cohesion and voter mobilisation efforts.

The Congress's decision to release its candidate lists in phases reflects a calculated approach to electoral planning. The party began with 42 candidates in its first list on March 3, followed by 23 in the second list on March 14 and 22 in the third list on March 19.

This staggered rollout allows the party to assess ground feedback, fine-tune its strategy, and accommodate alliance negotiations before finalising nominations. It also helps sustain media attention and political momentum over an extended period.

With 92 candidates now announced, the Congress is nearing the completion of its electoral slate. The remaining constituencies are expected to be finalised in coordination with alliance partners and based on evolving political calculations.

NSF Flags 'Illegal Appointments' in Nagaland, Gives Govt 45-Day Deadline for Action

KOHIMA

The Naga Students' Federation (NSF) has submitted a memorandum to the Nagaland government alleging large-scale irregularities in public sector recruitment and issued a 45-day ultimatum for corrective action.

In its representation to the Chief Secretary, the student body claimed that a number of appointments across government departments were made without adhering to established recruitment procedures, including proper advertisement and competitive selection processes.

Citing internal findings, the NSF alleged that around 109 posts across 16 departments were filled outside the purview of the Nagaland Staff Selection Board and the Nagaland Public Service Commission, describing the process as a violation of merit-based norms.

The federation has demanded termination of all such appointments within 45 days, arguing that the issue undermines transparency and fairness in public employment while adversely affecting educated unemployed youth in the state.

The memorandum included a detailed list of the alleged appointments along with supporting documents such as appointment orders, covering departments including transport, public health engineering, urban development, and public works.

Urging swift action, the NSF warned that failure to address the issue could deepen public distrust and further escalate concerns over recruitment practices in Nagaland.

Tripura TTAADC Polls: BJP Steps Up Preparations, Candidate List Expected Soon

AGARTALA

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has intensified its preparations for the upcoming elections to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), with the party expected to announce its list of candidates shortly.

Party sources said a series of internal meetings is underway to finalise electoral strategy and shortlist candidates, with emphasis on individuals possessing strong grassroots connect and a clean public image.

The TTAADC polls are being viewed as politically crucial, with Chief Minister Manik Saha earlier indicating that the party aims to contest all seats and expand its footprint in the tribal belt.

Meanwhile, the BJP's alliance with the Tipra Motha Party, which currently governs the council, appears uncertain as both parties ramp up independent efforts to consolidate their respective support bases.

In a related development, BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh and national secretary Vinod Sonkar, who are on a visit to the state, held a meeting with the Chief Minister in Agartala. Saha described the interaction as "meaningful and productive," focusing on organisational matters and development initiatives.

The central leaders also met state functionaries at the State Guest House, in the presence of Assembly Speaker Rampada Jamatia and ministers Tinku Roy and Kishor Barman, among others. Another key meeting is scheduled at Shaheed Bhagat Singh Yuva Awaas, where discussions are expected to centre on poll strategy and candidate selection ahead of voting slated for April 12.

According to the State Election Commission, a total of 9,62,697 voters are eligible to participate across 28 constituencies, with polling to be held at 1,257 stations. The counting of votes will take place on April 17.

AITC Enters Assam Poll Fray with First List of 17 Candidates, Sets Up Multi-Cornered Contests

GUWAHATI

The All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), led by Mamata Banerjee, has formally stepped into the Assam Assembly election arena with the release of its first list of 17 candidates, signalling an assertive push to expand its footprint in the state.

The list, unveiled by the party's Assam Pradesh unit, features candidates spread across Lower Assam, Upper Assam, and the Barak Valley-indicating a geographically balanced strategy aimed at establishing a statewide presence.

A major highlight of the announcement is the candidature of Assam Pradesh Trinamool Congress Senior Vice-President Dulu Ahmed, who has been fielded from the Chamaria constituency. His entry is expected to intensify the contest, with the Indian National Congress already nominating Re-kibuddin Ahmed from the seat, while the All India United Demo-



cratic Front (AIUDDF) has fielded Imdad Husaain-setting the stage for a keen multi-cornered battle.

The party has also named several prominent candidates across regions. In Lower Assam, nominees include Udangri Narzary (Baokhungri), Mominur Islam (Bilasipara), Arif Akhtar Ahmed (Jaleswar), Kaushik Ranjan Das

(Abhayapuri), Kalyani Kalita (Bajali), Bhoglal Rabha (Boko-Chay-gaon ST), Bikash Nath Yogi (Palasbari), Amirul Islam (Barkhetri), Rajan Chouhan (Goreswar), and Hare Krishna Deka (Mangaldai).

In Upper Assam, the party has fielded Jiten Nag from Digboi and Dilip Moran from Makum, while Narendra Kumar Paw has been

nominated from the Dhema (ST) constituency.

The Barak Valley segment of the list includes Tapas Das (Udharbond), Fazlur Rahman Laskar (Katigora), and Shaha-jahan Laskar (Sonai), reflecting the party's intent to make inroads into the region's politically significant constituencies.

With this announcement, the Trinamool Congress has made clear its ambitions to emerge as a notable player in Assam's electoral landscape. While the BJP-led alliance and the Opposition bloc remain dominant forces, AITC's entry is expected to further fragment the vote share and contribute to multi-cornered contests across several constituencies.

As the campaign gathers momentum, the party's ability to translate its candidate selection into grassroots support will determine whether this initial push evolves into a sustained political presence in the state.

Manipur Governor Inaugurates Agri-Youth Parliament 2026 at CAU Imphal, Stresses Innovation-Led Farming

IMPHAL

Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Saturday inaugurated the Agri-Youth Parliament 2026 at Central Agricultural University, underscoring the importance of innovation-driven and sustainable agriculture for the Northeast.

The three-day event, organised under the theme "Futuristic Agriculture for North East Bharat: Sustainability, Innovations and Opportunities," brings together researchers, students, policymakers, and entrepreneurs to deliberate on emerging trends and opportunities in agriculture and allied sectors.

Prior to the formal inauguration, the Governor toured exhibition stalls alongside CAU Vice-Chancellor Dr Anupam Mishra, interacting with participants and innovators while appreciating displays of indigenous products and cutting-edge agricul-



tural technologies.

The programme was attended by leading academicians, including Dipjyoti Rajkhowa, Vice-Chancellor of Assam Agricultural University, along with researchers and students from across the region. The Governor also released the Souvenir-Abstract Book during the event.

Addressing the gathering, Bhalla described the Agri-Youth Parliament as a vital platform for empowering young minds and shaping the future of agriculture in the Northeast. He emphasised that achieving the vision of a developed India would require transforming the agricultural sector through inno-

vation, entrepreneurship, and active youth participation.

Highlighting Manipur's strengths, he noted the state's rich biodiversity and indigenous knowledge systems, pointing to products such as Chakhao (black rice), Kachai Lemon, and Tamenglong Orange as examples with strong potential for global recognition through scientific intervention and improved market access.

He also stressed the need to integrate traditional farming practices with modern technologies, promote climate-resilient agriculture, strengthen infrastructure, and build robust market linkages. The Agri-Youth Parliament 2026 aims to foster dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaboration, paving the way for sustainable and inclusive agricultural development across the Northeast.

Aizawl Civic Polls: ZPM, MNF, Congress, BJP Step Up Campaign Ahead of April 21 Vote



AIZAWL

Political activity has intensified in Mizoram ahead of the Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) elections, with major parties accelerating campaign efforts and finalising candidates for the upcoming civic contest.

Polling for the 19-member Aizawl Municipal Corporation is scheduled for April 21, while counting of votes will take place on April 27.

The ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) has expressed confidence of retaining control of the civic body. Party general secretary Eddie Zosangliana Colney said candidates were selected through an extensive grassroots-level process, adding that the party aims to transform the capital into a "New Aizawl" through improved urban governance.

The opposition Mizo National Front (MNF), which held power in the AMC during the previous term, is also eyeing a comeback. MNF president and MLA Lalhmingliana Sailo said the party's organisation-

al machinery has been fully mobilised, focusing on restoring its governance vision for the civic body.

The Indian National Congress is contesting all 19 seats, positioning itself as a people-centric alternative. Meanwhile, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is seeking to expand its footprint, highlighting its alignment with the Centre to push development in the state.

While the MNF has already released its full list of candidates, the Congress has announced nominees for 13 of the 19 wards so far.

The elections will be conducted across all 19 wards from 7 am to 5 pm on April 21, with re-polling, if required, scheduled for April 23. The last date for filing nominations is March 25, and candidates can withdraw their candidature by March 30. According to official data, the electorate comprises around 2.39 lakh voters, including approximately 1.26 lakh women.

In the previous AMC elections held in 2021, the MNF secured a majority with 11 seats, while the ZPM won eight, setting the stage for a closely fought contest this time.

In Assam's Legislative Assembly election, Bengalis will play a decisive role

PRADIP DUTTA ROY

Ahead of the current Assembly election in Assam, signs are emerging that Bengalis in the state will play a decisive role. Bengalis make up about one-third of the state's population, making their vote crucial in many constituencies.

All political parties have used Bengalis as a vote bank, with the ruling BJP being no exception. They have kept Bengalis in economic, social, and political pressure, and have created divisions within the community. The BJP has also tried to limit Bengali representation by creating complexities in candidate selection and dividing Bengali-dominated areas.

However, this time, Bengali Hindus in the Brahmaputra Valley have decided to fight for their rights under a new organization, the Bharatiya Gana Parishad. The organization has announced candidates for 21 seats, which could impact the outcome in many constituencies.

The Bengali community has been subjected to harassment, especially during the National Register of Citizens (NRC) update. Many have been left out of the NRC, and some have



even been declared foreigners. The community is also facing unemployment and lack of representation in government jobs.

The BJP and Congress have been appealed to ensure Bengali representation in at least 10 seats. The organizations supporting this demand have advisors from various backgrounds, including retired IAS and IPS officers. They have made it clear that they will not be swayed by appeasement politics.

The Muslim Bengalis in the Brah-

maputra Valley are divided, with some supporting AIUDDF and others supporting Congress. The Hindu Bengali organizations are mostly separate from the Muslim Bengali organizations.

In the Barak Valley, there is also discontent against the ruling party. The BJP's internal conflicts and candidate selection issues may impact their performance.

The floating votes, which are not tied to any particular party, can play a crucial role in determining the out-

come. These voters may choose candidates based on their merit rather than party affiliation.

The election schedule has been announced, and the nomination process is underway. The next few days will determine the outcome of the election.

The Congress has lost some prominent leaders to the BJP, which has boosted the ruling party's morale. However, the voters will ultimately decide the fate of the parties.

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Selfish interests, desire for dominance root cause of global conflicts: Bhagwat



NAGPUR

Selfish interests and the desire for dominance were the root cause of conflicts in the world, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Friday, asserting that lasting peace can only be achieved through unity, discipline and adherence to dharma.

Addressing a gathering in Nagpur, Bhagwat said that for 2,000 years the world has experimented with various ideas to resolve conflicts with little success.

Religious intolerance, forced conversions and ideas of superiority and inferiority still exist, he

pointed out.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief was speaking at the gathering after laying the foundation stone for the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's office in the city. Bhagwat said that India's ancient wisdom teaches that "all are connected and one", and called for a shift from conflict to harmony and cooperation.

He further noted that even modern science is gradually moving towards this understanding.

The RSS chief noted that selfish interests and the desire for dominance were the root cause of

conflicts in the world, and said lasting peace can only be achieved through unity, discipline and adherence to dharma.

Highlighting the importance of conduct, Bhagwat said dharma cannot remain confined to scriptures, but must be reflected in people's behaviour.

Discipline and adherence to moral values require sustained practice and often involve personal hardship, he said.

While India believes in humanity, others believe in the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest, he said, reiterating that the world needs harmony, not conflict.

Trinamool Congress moves Calcutta HC against ECI for transferring several IAS, IPS officers ahead of Assembly polls

KOLKATA

Ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal moved the Calcutta High Court challenging the Election Commission of India (ECI) against transferring several IAS and IPS officers in the State.

The Trinamool Congress MP and senior lawyer Kalyan Banerjee filed a petition in the HC raising questions over the national poll panel's transfer orders of several bureaucrats, including the State chief secretary, home secretary and other IPS officers like director general of police (DGP) and commissioner of police, Kolkata after the announcement of poll dates in Bengal by the CEC in Delhi on Sunday.

The petitioner named the CEC a party respondent in the matter.

Mentioning the matter before a Division Bench presided by Chief Justice Sujoy Paul, the lawyer prayed for an early hearing of the petition.

The petition, which questions the transfers without consulting the State government before the ECI took the decisions, is likely to be heard early next week, a lawyer aware of the matter said.

The elections to the 294-member West Bengal Assembly will be held in two phases on April 23 and 29. Votes will be counted on May 4.

Hours after slamming the ECI on X post on Thursday afternoon, Mamata, in a formal letter to Kumar the same day evening, accused him of crossing all boundaries of decency and constitutional propriety with his whirlwind transfers of IAS and IPS officers of Bengal, suggesting a deliberate attempt to push the State into administrative instability and disorder.



"The situation resembled an Emergency or indirect central rule, and the poll panel's actions showed a clear bias and an uncomfortable submission to political interests", her latest letter to the CEC stated.

She said the 'unilateral' replacement of the chief secretary, home secretary and police chiefs alongside dozens of others in the police and civil adminis-

trations, including district mag-

istrates, amounted to direct interference in the state's affairs.

Earlier, she had attacked the ECI for overnight transfers of the top bureaucrats and police officers.

Sharpening her attacks on the Commission, the CM wrote on X post said, "The manner in which the Election Commission has singled out and targeted Bengal is not just unprecedented, it is deeply

alarming."

"Even before the formal notification of elections, more than 50 senior officials, including the Chief Secretary, Home Secretary, DGP, ADGs, IAs, DIGs, District Magistrates and Superintendents of Police, have been summarily and arbitrarily removed. This is not an administrative action; rather, this is political interference of the highest order," she stated.

INTERNATIONAL

Kuwait refinery hit as Iran says missile production 'no concern'

JERUSALEM

Firefighters battled a blaze at a giant oil refinery in Kuwait on Friday after a fresh drone attack as Iran kept up a wave of strikes on its neighbours and vowed there was "no concern" about its missile production.

Despite calls for an end to targeting Gulf energy infrastructure by European leaders on Thursday, Kuwait reported a fire at its Mina Al-Hamad refinery, a day after a direct hit on Qatar's vital Ras Laffan facility.

Iranian authorities had vowed to retaliate after an Israeli strike on Wednesday damaged its South Pars gas field, which draws on the world's biggest known gas reserve and is vital for domestic supplies.

The escalating damage to Gulf infrastructure has spiked oil and gas prices again and led to fears of lasting damage to global supplies, even as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu indicated an end to the fighting could be close.

"We are winning and Iran is being decimated," the Israeli premier said at a press conference on Thursday, claiming Tehran no longer had the capacity to manufacture ballistic missiles.

"This war is ending a lot faster than people think," he added without providing a specific timeframe.

Iran's leaders, despite an Israeli assassination campaign and three weeks of bombardment, have vowed to end the conflict on their own terms.

"Our missile industry deserves a perfect score... and there is no concern in this regard, because even under wartime conditions we continue missile production," Iran's Revolutionary Guards spokesman Ali Mohammad Naini was quoted as saying by the Pars news agency.

Moments after his message was shared by the agency, the Revolutionary Guards said he had been killed in US-Israeli strikes.

Iran retains a stranglehold over the strategic Strait of Hormuz through which a fifth of global oil and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) usually flows.



Iranian state media reported several waves of missiles fired at Israel overnight and Friday morning, with blasts heard over Jerusalem. There were no reports of casualties.

The United Arab Emirates also reported missile attacks, while Saudi Arabia intercepted more than a dozen drones early Friday as Gulf nations began the observation of Eid al-Fitr, the holiday that marks the end of the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan.

Energy analysts and consumers were scrambling to count the cost of Iranian missiles hitting Qatar's huge Ras Laffan natural gas complex on Thursday.

The attack caused "extensive damage" that Qatar's state energy company said could cost \$20 billion a year in lost revenue and take five years to repair.

That could lead to high energy prices that outlast the conflict, which would increase inflation and crimp consumer spending.

"Short disruptions create price volatility. Sustained damage creates

lasting economic shock," Robert Pape, a political science and military expert at the University of Chicago, wrote on his Substack.

"This is how a regional war becomes an historic global economic crisis."

He warned about further escalation that could include US President Donald Trump and Netanyahu ordering a limited ground invasion to try to secure the Strait of Hormuz.

Netanyahu indicated that changing the government in Tehran would require "a ground component", without elaborating.

"There are many possibilities for this ground component and I take the liberty of not sharing (those) with you," he said.

Oil prices fell on Friday as traders reacted to Netanyahu's comments about the war ending "a lot faster than people think", but they pared the losses amid news of the Kuwait refinery fire.

Brent remains at around \$108 and West Texas Intermediate about \$94.

The war, which has killed thousands

and displaced millions, has quickly spread to Lebanon where the Israeli military has carried out regular bombardments in response to rocket fire on Israel by Iran ally Hezbollah.

Lebanon's health ministry said the death toll from Israeli airstrikes on southern and eastern Lebanon as well as on the capital Beirut and its southern suburbs has surpassed 1,000.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, during a meeting with French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot on Thursday, renewed a call for a truce between Israel and Hezbollah and the opening of negotiations that France's president later said depended on Israel agreeing to join.

Many around the region ended the holy month of Ramadan on a bitter note, unsettled by the war and facing rising prices.

"There's nothing to celebrate," said Aziza Ahmad, who has cancelled her family's normal plans for a festive meal and gifts for the children, her small Beirut apartment hosting several displaced relatives.

"Maybe it's different for the rich, but the joy of Eid is missing here... We have no money, and the displaced people can't even go back home," she said.

Iranians were marking the new year spring festival of Nowruz on Friday, as well as the final day of Ramadan, with state media reporting Iran would observe the start of the Eid holiday on Saturday.

Hoda, who lives in Saveh, south of Tehran, said she would "definitely gather with family" and even travel to the capital, which has seen some of the worst of the war's strikes.

"We assume and hope that there will be no attacks on the first day of the new year," she told an AFP reporter based outside Iran.

As concerns grow over the conflict's economic fallout, President Emmanuel Macron said France planned to talk with permanent members of the UN Security Council about establishing a framework to secure navigation in the Strait of Hormuz - but only after fighting had stopped.

USS Tripoli carrying 2,200 Marines navigates Indian Ocean en route West Asia as conflict escalates

WASHINGTON

At least one US Navy warship carrying more than 2,000 Marines is on its way to the Middle East, signaling an additional military buildup in the region and fueling speculation about the possible deployment of American ground forces into Iran, according to a report by USA Today.

According to the report, satellite images showed the USS Tripoli, an America-class amphibious assault ship, along with two escort vessels, travelling southwest across the South China Sea on March 15. The warship was spotted near Singapore a day later, and it is reportedly currently navigating the southern Indian Ocean, close to Indian waters, as it heads toward the Middle East. It remains unclear whether the two escort ships accompanying the Tripoli will continue with the amphibious assault ship or detach along the route.

The Tripoli is carrying personnel from the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, a rapid-response force of approximately 2,200 Marines and Navy sailors based in Okinawa, Japan. The MEU contains both ground and aerial combat units, allowing it to respond to a wide spectrum of operational requirements. An MEU is composed of four elements. The command element serves as the headquarters for the unit and allows a single command structure to coordinate all ground, aviation, and combat service forces. The ground combat element is built around a Marine infantry battalion and is reinforced with tanks, artillery, amphibious vehicles, engineers, and reconnaissance assets.

The air combat element consists of a helicopter squadron that includes transport helicopters of various types and attack helicopters, jets, air defense teams, and ground support personnel. Finally, the logistics combat element

provides critical support to the MEU, including medical and dental assistance, motor transport, supply, equipment maintenance, and coordination for amphibious landings.

The 31st MEU is capable of executing a wide range of missions. These include peacekeeping operations, humanitarian aid and disaster relief, security operations, noncombatant evacuation operations, reinforcement operations, amphibious raids and assaults, tactical deception operations, airfield and port seizures, show-of-force operations, reconnaissance and surveillance, and the seizure and recovery of offshore energy facilities. The versatility of the MEU allows it to operate across land, sea, and air simultaneously, providing the United States with a rapid-response capability in the region without the immediate commitment of large-scale ground forces.

It could take as long as two weeks for the Marine unit to be fully in position once it reaches the Middle East.

The Tripoli is expected to join the USS Gerald R. Ford and USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike groups, which have already participated in US attacks on Iran. The USS Gerald R. Ford is scheduled to travel to Souda Bay, Crete, for repairs after a laundry room fire on March 12. Though it resembles an aircraft carrier, the Tripoli is an amphibious assault ship capable of carrying dozens of aircraft, including F-35 fighter jets, MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor helicopters, and MH-60S Seahawk helicopters. The ship measures approximately 844 feet in length, compared with the 1,106-foot Gerald R. Ford, currently the largest warship in the world.

US President Trump had addressed the deployment on March 19, denying that the United States was sending troops to the Middle East,

even as the Tripoli was en route. When reporters asked whether he intended to put more US troops in the region, Trump said, "I'm not putting troops anywhere. If I were, I certainly wouldn't tell you. But I'm not putting troops."

According to USA Today, Trump has discussed using ground troops for specific strategic purposes but has ruled out a large-scale invasion. The Pentagon has not officially disclosed how many US service members are actively involved in the Iran conflict, although news reports have estimated that between 40,000 and 50,000 troops are already deployed to support ongoing operations.

Despite these denials, military analysts say the deployment of the Tripoli and its Marine unit is a visible signal of US readiness and operational flexibility. While the presence of a fully equipped MEU does not necessarily indicate that troops will be sent into the interior of Iran, it demonstrates the capability to respond rapidly to developments in the region, including the protection of critical sea lanes and strategic chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz.

Observers also note that the 31st MEU's versatility, combined with its ability to carry both ground and aerial combat units, allows the United States to maintain a forward posture and a deterrent presence without committing to a direct ground invasion. USA Today adds that, public sentiment in the United States adds an additional layer of complexity. A Quinnipiac University poll conducted on March 9 found that 74 percent of registered voters opposed sending troops into Iran, while only 20 percent supported such a move. Analysts warn that any expansion of ground operations could influence public opinion further and intensify domestic scrutiny of the war.

New Players, New Playbook: AAP, JBP and LJP Redefine Assam's 2026 Electoral Battle



As Assam inches closer to the 2026 Assembly elections, the contours of its political landscape are undergoing a quiet yet consequential transformation. While the BJP-led alliance and the Opposition bloc continue to dominate the electoral narrative, the emergence of new political players is adding fresh layers of complexity to the contest. No longer confined to the margins, these entrants are recalibrating campaign strategies, voter outreach, and alliance dynamics in ways that could reshape the state's political discourse.

Among the most notable of these emerging forces are the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the Jai Bharat Party (JBP), and the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas). Each of these parties is adopting a distinct approach-ranging from grassroots expansion to identity-based alliances and targeted voter mobilisation-reflecting varied interpretations of Assam's evolving political and social realities.

AAP: Betting on Organisational Depth

For the Aam Aadmi Party, Assam represents both a strategic opportunity and a formidable challenge. Having already announced its first list of 14 candidates, the party has signalled that it intends to be a serious contender rather than a peripheral participant.

AAP's approach is rooted in building a robust grassroots organisation across the state. From Upper Assam to Barak Valley and Lower Assam, the party is attempting to establish a presence that goes beyond electoral cycles. Its emphasis on door-to-door campaigns, local engagement, and cadre-building reflects a long-term vision aimed at creating a sustainable political base.

A defining feature of AAP's strategy is its decision to avoid alliances. Drawing from past experiences-particularly its fraught relationship with the Congress in other states-the party appears determined to contest independently. This approach is not without risks. In a state where electoral outcomes are often



Sometimes trusting your intuition leads you right.

shaped by coalition arithmetic, going solo could limit immediate electoral gains. However, AAP seems willing

to trade short-term success for long-term organisational growth.

The party's Northeast in-charge Rajesh Sharma has underscored this thinking, pointing to ongoing groundwork as evidence of its commitment. His candid criticism of the Congress as an unreliable partner further highlights AAP's intent to carve out an independent political identity.

With a reported membership base of around five lakh in Assam, the party is now focused on converting numerical strength into electoral influence. Whether this strategy translates into votes remains to be seen, but it has already positioned AAP as a serious entrant in the state's political arena.

JBP: Alliance Politics and Identity Assertion

In contrast to AAP's solo strategy, the Jai Bharat Party is placing its bets on alliances and identity-driven mobilisation. The party's outreach to the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) is a calculated move aimed at tapping into Assam's tea-tribe population-a significant voter segment with deep socio-cultural ties to Jharkhand.

The proposed alliance, which could potentially cover around 40 constituencies, is still under discussion. Yet, even at this stage, it signals JBP's intent to build a broader coalition that transcends regional boundaries. By aligning with a party like JMM, JBP is attempting to position itself as a bridge between local aspirations and external political networks.

JBP president Teharu Gour has expressed confidence that such a partnership could emerge as a "significant political force" in the state. Meanwhile, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren's involvement in discussions suggests that the alliance could be part of a larger strategic framework.

What makes JBP's approach particularly noteworthy is its focus on identity politics-not in a divisive sense, but as a means of mobilising historically under-represented communities. By targeting tea-tribe voters, the party is seeking to address long-standing socio-economic concerns while simultaneously building a loyal support base.

However, the absence of a declared candidate list indicates that JBP's electoral strategy is still evolving. Much will depend on the outcome of its alliance negotiations and its ability to translate symbolic outreach into tangible voter support.

LJP (Ram Vilas): Targeted Expansion

and Strategic Positioning

The Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), led by Chirag Paswan, is approaching Assam as part of its broader national expansion strategy. Unlike AAP's wide-spectrum outreach or JBP's alliance-centric model, LJP is focusing on specific voter segments that it believes offer the greatest potential for growth.

Central to its campaign is the "Assam First" narrative, which emphasises youth empowerment, employment generation, and economic development. These themes are particularly relevant in a state where a growing young population is increasingly vocal about job opportunities and economic mobility.

At the same time, LJP is working to consolidate support among Hindi-speaking communities and labour groups-demographics that have historically played a role in shaping electoral outcomes in certain regions of Assam. By targeting these segments, the party aims to build a niche yet impactful presence.

Chirag Paswan has indicated that the

party will take a final call on contesting the elections after assessing ground realities. However, ongoing organisational efforts suggest that preparations are already underway.

LJP's positioning is marked by a delicate balancing act. While it remains aligned with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the national level, it is also striving to establish an independent identity within Assam. This dual approach could either enhance its appeal or complicate its messaging, depending on how effectively it is executed.

Beyond Numbers: A Changing Electoral Narrative

The entry of AAP, JBP, and LJP into Assam's political landscape does not immediately threaten the dominance of established players. The BJP-led alliance and the Opposition bloc continue to command significant organisational strength, resources, and voter loyalty.

However, the presence of these new entrants is already influencing the broader electoral narrative. Campaign strategies are becoming more nuanced, with greater emphasis on grassroots engagement, targeted outreach, and issue-based politics. Voters, in turn, are being presented with a wider array of choices, each offering a different vision for the state's future.

AAP's focus on organisational depth challenges traditional alliance politics. JBP's emphasis on identity and partnerships highlights the importance of community-based mobilisation. LJP's targeted approach underscores the growing significance of demographic-specific strategies.

Together, these developments point to an evolving political ecosystem where electoral success may increasingly depend on adaptability, innovation, and the ability to connect with diverse voter groups.

The Road Ahead

As the 2026 Assembly elections draw nearer, the role of these emerging parties will become clearer. Will AAP's grassroots strategy yield dividends? Can JBP's alliance-building efforts translate into electoral gains? Will LJP's targeted outreach resonate with voters?

While definitive answers remain elusive, one thing is certain: Assam's political landscape is no longer a two-horse race. The entry of new players has introduced fresh dynamics that could influence not just the outcome of the elections, but also the nature of political engagement in the state.

In this evolving scenario, the question is no longer limited to who will win, but how the contest itself is being reshaped. As parties refine their strategies and voters weigh their options, Assam's 2026 elections promise to be as much about transformation as they are about power.

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