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PERSPECTIVE
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Centre Restores Commercial LPG Supply to 70% in Meghalaya After Disruption

SHILLONG
The Centre has raised commercial LPG allocation to 70 per cent of previous levels in Meghalaya, offering relief after a sharp supply cut earlier this month disrupted fuel availability for businesses across the state. State Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister Comingone Ymbon said domestic LPG distribution has remained unaffected despite recent reports of long queues at gas agencies. Officials said the improved allocation follows consultations between the state government and the Centre, along with a review of supply conditions nationwide. Director of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Said Verma noted that commercial LPG supply had been reduced to 20 per cent from March 11 due to import disruptions linked to tensions in the Middle East. The cut had significantly impacted Meghalaya's hospitality sector, where an estimated 1,000 commercial LPG cylinders are required daily by hotels, dhabas, and restaurants. However, supply has begun to stabilise, with around 400 cylinders being delivered daily over the past three days. Verma clarified that essential services, including hospitals and educational institutions, continued to receive uninterrupted LPG supply during the disruption. Domestic cooking gas distribution also remained steady, with 5,000 to 7,000 cylinders supplied daily even after the March 11 reduction.

Addressing concerns over long queues, officials attributed the issue largely to Know Your Customer (KYC) verification measures introduced to curb hoarding and duplication. Between March 25 and 27, a total of 22,904 domestic LPG cylinders were distributed across the state.

WHO SAID WHAT

Grok automatically translating and recommending posts from other languages is starting to work. ~ Elon Musk, American Entrepreneur

EVM Commissioning for Assam Polls Begins March 31; Over 41,000 Ballot Units to Be Prepared

GUWAHATI
The commissioning of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections 2026 will commence on March 31 across all 126 constituencies, officials said.

The process will be carried out at designated centres notified by District Election Officers under the supervision of engineers and technical teams from Electronics Corporation of India Limited, ensuring strict adherence to guidelines laid down by the Election Commission of India.

Officials said the commissioning exercise will



take place in the presence of contesting candidates and their authorised representatives to maintain transparency and accountability.

A total of 41,353 Ballot Units (BUs), 45,572 Control Units (CUs), and 44,830 Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) units will be readied for deployment. In addition, reserve stock has been arranged, including 9,863 BUs, 14,082 CUs, and 13,340 VVPATs.

As per established norms, symbol loading in each VVPAT unit will be conducted using Symbol Loading Units (SLUs). Candidates and their representatives will be allowed to verify the process to ensure accuracy. To further strengthen transparency, officials said candidates or their representatives may randomly select up to five per cent of the EVMs and VVPAT units for mock poll verification. Polling for the 126-member Assembly is scheduled for April 9, with counting set for May 4. The election will be the first in the state following the recent delimitation exercise.

BJP Promises Jobs, UCC and Free Education in 31-Point Assam Poll Manifesto

GUWAHATI
The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Tuesday released its 31-point Sankalp Patra for the April 9 Assam Assembly elections, outlining an ambitious roadmap focused on economic expansion, welfare delivery and governance reforms, while foregrounding contentious proposals such as a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and stricter anti-infiltration measures.

The manifesto was unveiled at Vaipayee Bhawan in Guwahati in the presence of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Minister Sarbajit Barman and state BJP president Dilip Saikia, among other senior leaders. Launching the document, Sitharaman described it as a "vision-backed roadmap" anchored in what she called a decade of delivery by BJP governments at both the Centre and in Assam. "This is not merely a list of promises, but a structured plan for a secure, developed and self-reliant Assam," she said.

Positioning development as the core electoral plank, Sitharaman highlighted key economic indicators to underline the



government's existing initiatives while setting out a forward-looking agenda. "It is a balanced vision document that combines development, welfare and strong governance, while protecting the identity and rights of the people of Assam," Sarma said.

The manifesto places significant emphasis on safeguarding indigenous land and culture, alongside pledges to detect and deport illegal immigrants and reclaim encroached land-issues that have remained politically sensitive in the state.

Key promises

The 31-point charter spans infrastructure, employment, welfare and social policy commitments:

- A Rs 5 lakh crore investment push aimed at boosting infrastructure and connectivity
- Rs 18,000 crore allocation for flood control and mitigation
- Creation of 2 lakh government jobs and support for 10 lakh entrepreneurs
- Legal and administrative measures to protect indigenous land, culture and heritage
- Detection and deportation of illegal

immigrants, along with land reclamation drives

Introduction of a Uniform Civil Code and stricter anti-infiltration laws

Free essential commodities for economically weaker sections

Expansion of the Orunodoi scheme with assistance increased up to Rs 3,000 per month

One-time financial assistance of Rs 25,000 for 40 lakh women beneficiaries

Free education from pre-primary to university level

Establishment of medical and engineering colleges, along with a university, in every district

The release of the manifesto comes amid an intensifying campaign ahead of the April 9 polls, with the BJP aiming to retain power for a third consecutive term.

The party has sharpened its pitch around development metrics and welfare expansion while simultaneously foregrounding issues of identity, migration and legal reform-signalling a dual-track strategy for the high-stakes electoral contest in Assam.

Rajnath Singh Touts Security Gains, Targets Congress in Tezpur Rally Ahead of Assam Polls

TEZPUR
Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday credited the BJP-led governments at the Centre and in Assam for what he described as a "remarkable transformation" in the state's security and development landscape, while launching a sharp attack on the Congress during a campaign rally in Tezpur.

Addressing voters in support of BJP candidate Prithviraj Rava in the Tezpur Assembly constituency, Singh said Assam has moved beyond its past association with insurgency and instability to emerge as a key growth driver in the Northeast.

"There was a time when Assam was identified with militancy, insurgency and poverty. Today, these are no longer the defining issues of the state," Singh said, drawing on his experience in national security to underline the shift.

Highlighting the decline in insurgency-related incidents, Singh said the period between 2001 and 2015 saw sustained violence, with an average of over 300 incidents annually involving multiple militant outfits.

He attributed the improved security environment to a combination of policy decisions and political resolve under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and the central government.

"More than 7,500 militants have surrendered under the BJP government. This reflects what the right policy framework and strong political will can achieve," he said.

Linking security gains with economic progress, Singh said the "double-engine government" has accelerated development across sectors. "Assam has become an engine of growth for the Northeast," he asserted.

On economic indicators, he claimed that the state's economy has nearly tripled over the past decade, with a growth rate of around 45% between 2020 and 2025, citing Reserve Bank of India assessments.

Projecting future ambitions, Singh said Assam is on track to achieve a \$150-billion economy by 2030. "I firmly believe the state will meet this target," he added.

The Defence Minister also highlighted sectoral improvements, particularly in healthcare and connectivity. He said the number of medical colleges in Assam has increased from six earlier to 14 at present, with 10 more in the pipeline.

"The health budget has risen from about Rs 4,000 crore during the Congress period to nearly Rs 9,000 crore now," he noted. On connectivity, Singh pointed to a significant expansion in air routes. "Before 2014, Assam had only seven air routes. Today, around 30 routes are operational, strengthening links with the rest of the country," he said.

Targeting the opposition, Singh accused the Congress of neglecting Assam and the wider Northeast during its years in power. "Congress kept Assam away from Delhi and ignored the aspirations of the region," he alleged.

Contrasting approaches to border development, he added, "Congress described border villages as the last villages of India. We consider them the first villages of the nation."

Singh also underscored the Centre's engagement with the region under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, noting that Modi has visited Assam around 30 times over the past 11 years.

Expressing confidence ahead of the Assembly elections, the Defence Minister said the public mood favours the BJP-led alliance. "Looking at the enthusiasm among people, no force can stop the NDA from forming the government again in Assam," he asserted.

Over 2.3 Lakh Electors to Vote from Home in Assembly Polls, Says ECI

NEW DELHI
The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced that more than 2.37 lakh voters across Assam, Kerala and Puducherry will avail the home voting facility in the upcoming Assembly elections, in a move aimed at enhancing accessibility and voter participation.

The provision, enabled under the Representation of the People Act, 1951, allows elderly citizens aged above 85 years and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) to cast their votes from home through postal ballots.

According to the Commission, designated polling teams are visiting the residences of eligible voters to facilitate the process, with prior notification of schedules. The exercise has already commenced in several constituencies and will continue until April 5.

To ensure transparency and integrity, the entire home voting process is being videographed. Polling teams are accompanied by security personnel, while candidates and political parties have been informed and permitted to depute representatives to observe the proceedings.

The ECI also stated that voters who do not opt for home voting will be provided assistance at polling stations, including wheelchairs and volunteer support, to ensure a smooth and inclusive voting experience.

Polling for the Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala and Puducherry is scheduled for April 9, with counting of votes set to take place on May 4.

Manipur MP Seeks Pause on Census, Delimitation, Flags Data Irregularities and Border Concerns

IMPHAL
Lok Sabha MP Angomcha Bimol Akoijam has urged Union Home Minister Amit Shah to defer the proposed Census and subsequent delimitation exercise in Manipur, citing longstanding anomalies in population data and rising concerns over illegal immigration.

In a formal communication submitted after raising the matter under Rule 377 in Parliament, Akoijam flagged what he described as "historical inconsistencies" in census figures, particularly pointing to the 2001 enumeration. According to the MP, several hill sub-divisions recorded unusually sharp population growth during that period, raising questions about the reliability of the data.

He referenced a 2007 judgment of the Gauhati High Court, which had termed the 2001 Census figures in parts of Manipur as "highly suspect" and recommended a fresh population count before the data could be used for delimitation. Akoijam argued that despite such observations, the concerns have not been adequately addressed.

The MP contended that the abnormal population growth trends could not be explained by natural demographic factors alone. Citing academic studies, he suggested that the discrepancies may have been influenced by political considerations, including competition for legislative representation.

Highlighting border security issues, Akoijam drew attention to Manipur's porous international boundary with Myanmar, noting a

rise in cross-border movement amid ongoing instability in the neighbouring nation. He stressed the need to distinguish between historical migration patterns and recent influxes of what he termed "alien subjects" in the post-independence period.

The MP also conveyed concerns among local communities over the alleged role of illegal immigrants in the state's ongoing unrest. He pointed to suspected links between such elements and drug trafficking networks, including poppy cultivation associated with the Golden Triangle.

Placing the issue in a broader historical context, Akoijam noted that anxieties over demographic changes in the Northeast are not new. He referred to earlier migration flows linked to developments in erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, which have continued to shape regional politics and public perception.

Calling for corrective steps, the MP urged the Centre to prioritise an updated National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise under the Citizenship Act, 1955, before undertaking any census-linked delimitation. He also recommended the establishment of Foreigners Tribunals in Manipur to identify non-citizens through due legal process.

Further, Akoijam emphasised the need to strengthen the law and order situation, particularly in areas where armed groups remain influential. He argued that a credible verification process would require conditions that ensure transparency and prevent coercion.

Assam Ranks Second in Jal Jeevan Mission Complaints with 1,226 Grievances

NEW DELHI
Assam has recorded the second-highest number of complaints under the Centre's Jal Jeevan Mission, with 1,226 grievances flagged, the government informed the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

In a written reply, Minister of State for Jal Shakti V Somanna said that a total of 18,790 complaints have been received nationwide under the scheme, which aims to provide potable tap water to every rural household.

Among states, Uttar Pradesh reported the highest number of complaints at 16,178, followed by Assam.

The grievances pertain to issues such as financial irregularities, substandard quality of work, and non-functional tap water connections. These complaints have been sourced from media reports, public representatives, citizens, and official grievance redressal portals.

The minister reiterated that drinking water remains a state subject, placing primary responsibility

for implementation on state governments, while the Centre extends financial and technical assistance under the mission.

Providing an update on progress, Somanna noted that since the launch of the scheme in August 2019, more than 12.59 crore rural households across the country have been provided tap water connections. As of March 8, approximately 81.72 per cent of rural households nationwide have access to tap water.

He also flagged key challenges affecting implementation, including water scarcity, groundwater contamination, difficult terrain, and scattered habitations-factors particularly relevant to states such as Assam.

The Centre has extended the mission's timeline till December 2028 with enhanced financial allocation, aiming to complete pending works while prioritising coverage in vulnerable and hard-to-reach regions through coordinated efforts with states.



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IS WAR NECESSARY FOR PEACE?

The Ongoing War in the Middle East has certainly stirred and jolted the present world posing quite a very complex and jumbled proposition as to whether in the course of critical times war becomes a living reality to create and regenerate a congenial scenario for having life long stint of the enduring peace amongst the societies for the ultimate prosperity and prolonged usefulness of holistic human endeavor forever. Let us dive deep and churn out the ultimate basic truth: Human civilization has always oscillated between the ideals of peace and the harsh realities of war. Philosophers, Strategists and political leaders do often debate that as to whether war can ever be justified as means to achieve lasting peace. While some argue that war is sometimes necessary to eliminate tyranny or restore stability. History repeatedly demonstrates that wars often create deeper divisions, suffering, and long-term instability. The ongoing conflicts in the Middle East or West Asia—particularly the wars involving Gaza strip, Israel, Iran and Yemen raise serious questions, whether war truly leads to peace or merely perpetuates cycles of violence. In theory, some scholars of International relations believe in the concept of “war for peace”. The logic is that decisive military action can dismantle oppressive regimes or deter aggression. For example, the devastation of world war II, Institutions like United Nations were created to maintain global peace. However, the paradox remains that while war may sometimes stop a particular threat, it rarely removes the deeper political, economic and ideological conflicts that caused it.

The contemporary conflicts in West Asia highlight this dilemma quite vividly. The Israel-Palestine conflict which escalated dramatically after October 7 Hamas-led attack on Israel, has resulted in massive destruction and humanitarian crises. Thousands of civilians have suffered, cities have been devastated and the region remains deeply polarized. Similarly the long standing rivalry between Iran and Israel has raised fears of a wider regional war, while the civil war in Yemen continues to devastate one of the world's poorest nation. These conflicts illustrate that war often multiplies grievances than resolving them. Another critical dimension of these wars is the role of geopolitical interests and natural resources. The Middle East possesses nearly half of the world's proven oil reserves, making it strategically vital for global energy security. Major powers have historically competed for influence in the region to secure access to the resources such as petroleum and natural gas. The involvement of external powers in countries like Iraq and Syria have often been interpreted by critics as driven partly by resource interests and strategic dominance. While uranium resources are not the central factor in Middle Eastern conflicts, nuclear ambitions, particularly those associated with Iran—have intensified global tensions. Thus it is not entirely inaccurate to say that resource competition, combined with strategic arrogance and ideological rivalries fuel many of these wars.

However, reducing all conflicts merely to the struggle for oil or uranium would be an over simplification. Historical grievances, territorial disputes, religious divisions and political power struggles also play a major role. For example, roots of Israel-Palestine conflict lie in the complex history surrounding the creation of the modern state of Israel in 1948, displacement of populations and unresolved questions of sovereignty. These layered causes make it extremely difficult for military solutions alone to bring sustainable peace. The consequences of war extend far beyond the immediate battlefield. Humanitarian catastrophes, displacement of millions, destruction of infrastructure, and long term psychological trauma are common outcomes. Economies collapse, Education systems are disrupted and generations grow up in environments of fear and instability. The refugee crisis arising from conflicts in Syria and Yemen demonstrates how regional wars can become global humanitarian challenges. For a country like India, these conflicts carry serious implications. Our country heavily depends on energy imports from the Gulf region, making stability in west Asia crucial for its economic security. Escalating conflicts can lead to higher oil prices, disruption in shipping routes and inflationary pressures on the Indian economy. Furthermore, millions of Indian expatriates work in countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Any regional instability directly affects their safety and livelihoods. India must, therefore, carefully balance its diplomatic relations with all sides while advocating peace and stability.

India's traditional foreign policy principle of strategic autonomy and peaceful existence can pay a constructive role in addressing such crises. Right from the beginning, India has supported dialogue, non-alignment and multilateral diplomacy. In recent years, India has strengthened ties with Israel while also maintaining cordial relations with Arab countries and Iran. This balanced approach places India in a unique position to encourage dialogue and humanitarian cooperation. For the purpose of resolving the gigantic crisis facing the Middle East and preventing further global instability, several measures are essential such as: 1. Diplomatic engagement must replace military confrontation. International organizations like the United Nations must be strengthened so that they can act as effective mediators. 2. Major powers should avoid turning regional conflicts into proxy wars. When external powers compete for influence, local disputes often escalate into prolonged wars. 3. Economic cooperation and regional development initiatives can reduce tensions by creating shared interests. Investments in education, infrastructure and employment opportunities can help stabilize societies that are currently vulnerable to conflict. 4. Humanitarian aid and reconstruction must be prioritized to alleviate the sufferings of civilians. 5. Finally there must be a global commitment to ethical leadership and restraint. Military strength may deter aggression but arrogance and unilateralism often deepen hostility. Genuine peace requires justice, dialogue and mutual respect among nations. As the ancient Indian philosophy of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam”—the world is one family—suggests, humanity must rise above narrow national interests to protect collective survival.

In conclusion, war may sometimes be fought with the intention of securing peace but History shows that it rarely delivers lasting harmony. Instead, wars often intensify hatred and leave unresolved grievances that fuel future conflicts. The ongoing crises in the Middle East demonstrate that military solutions alone cannot resolve deeply rooted political and historical disputes. For countries like India and for the global community, the challenge is to strengthen diplomacy, promote cooperation and prioritize human welfare over power politics. Only through dialogue, justice and collective responsibility can the world move from the destructive cycle of war toward the enduring ideal of peace. Jai Bharat

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“If you don't fail, you're not even trying.” - Denzel Washington

CHALLENGE TO GOLD'S SAFE HAVEN STATUS



L K RAVEENDRAN

Gold's abrupt retreat has emerged as one of the more striking anomalies in a period otherwise defined by geopolitical escalation and market anxiety, challenging long-held assumptions about the metal's role as a sanctuary during crises. A decline of roughly 20 percent from levels above \$5,000 an ounce reached in January marks not just a technical correction but a deeper shift in how investors are responding to overlapping shocks, from military confrontation involving Iran to persistent uncertainties in global growth. The contrast with oil markets, which have reacted sharply to even tentative signals surrounding the Strait of Hormuz, underscores how gold's behaviour has diverged from its traditional script.

At first glance, the sell-off appears counterintuitive. Historically, periods of heightened geopolitical tension, especially those centred on energy chokepoints such as Hormuz, have tended to bolster gold prices as investors seek protection against volatility, inflation risks and currency instability. Yet the current phase suggests that the safe haven narrative is not immune to disruption, particularly when financial conditions tighten and leverage unwinds rapidly across markets. The fall in gold, therefore, is less a repudiation of its intrinsic appeal and more a reflection of the mechanics of modern capital flows.

A critical factor has been the scale of leveraged positioning that built up during gold's ascent. The surge to record highs earlier in the year was fuelled not only by geopolitical hedging but also by substantial speculative activity, much of it financed through borrowed capital. As prices climbed, margin requirements tightened, and when volatility spiked, investors were compelled to liquidate positions to meet calls. This forced selling created a feedback loop, accelerating the downward move and amplifying price swings beyond what underlying fundamentals might justify. In such an environment, gold be-

haves less like a defensive asset and more like any other crowded trade subject to rapid de-risking.

The broader macroeconomic backdrop has compounded these pressures. Concerns about global growth, intensified by the ripple effects of conflict involving Iran, have introduced a paradox: while uncertainty typically supports gold, a deteriorating economic outlook can also strengthen the US dollar and raise real interest rates, both of which tend to weigh on bullion. If investors anticipate tighter financial conditions or seek liquidity, they may favour cash or dollar-denominated assets over gold, at least in the short term. This dynamic helps explain why gold has struggled even as geopolitical risks remain elevated.

Oil markets provide a useful counterpoint. Prices have reacted swiftly to any perceived threat to supply through the Strait of Hormuz, reflecting the immediate and tangible implications for global energy flows. Gold, by contrast, is influenced less by direct supply disruptions and more by financial conditions, investor positioning and expectations about monetary policy. The divergence between the two commodities highlights the complexity of interpreting market signals during periods of crisis, where different asset classes respond to distinct drivers.

Another dimension to consider is the evolving nature of safe haven demand itself.

The past decade has seen the emergence of alternative assets, including digital currencies and a broader array of financial instruments, which compete with gold for investor attention during times of stress. While gold retains a unique historical and psychological appeal, its dominance is no longer uncontested. Some investors may have diversified their hedging strategies, reducing the automatic flow of capital into bullion that characterised earlier crises. This shift does not negate gold's role but suggests it operates within a more crowded and dynamic landscape.

At the same time, central bank

behaviour remains a stabilising force. Many monetary authorities, particularly in emerging markets, have continued to accumulate gold as part of efforts to diversify reserves and reduce reliance on the US dollar. This structural demand provides an underlying floor for prices, even if it is not immediately visible during episodes of market stress. The interplay between official sector buying and private sector liquidation is a key factor shaping the current trajectory of gold.

The notion that gold has lost its safe haven status may therefore be overstated. What the recent decline reveals is a temporal mismatch between geopolitical risk and financial market responses. In the initial phase of a crisis, especially one that triggers margin calls and liquidity pressures, gold can be sold alongside other assets as investors scramble for cash. Only later, as positions stabilise and uncertainty persists, does its traditional role tend to reassert itself. This pattern has been observed in previous episodes, including the early stages of the global financial crisis, when gold initially fell before embarking on a sustained rally.

Looking ahead, the trajectory of gold will hinge on several interrelated factors. The evolution of the conflict involving Iran and the broader stability of West Asia will remain central, particularly in shaping investor perceptions of risk. Equally important will be the direction of global monetary policy. If central banks pivot towards easing in response to economic weakness, lower real interest rates could provide a supportive environment for gold. Conversely, if inflation concerns keep policy tight, the metal may face continued headwinds.

Investor positioning will also play a decisive role.

The unwinding of leveraged bets appears to have been a major driver of the recent decline, and as this process runs its course, the market may find a more stable footing. Reduced speculative excess could, in fact, strengthen the foundation for a renewed uptrend, as prices become more

closely aligned with underlying demand rather than momentum-driven flows.

The psychological dimension should not be underestimated either. Gold's status as a safe haven is rooted not only in economic fundamentals but also in collective belief. Periods of sharp decline can shake confidence, prompting questions about whether the metal still fulfils its traditional function. Yet such doubts often prove transient, particularly if underlying risks remain unresolved. As the immediate pressures of forced selling subside and attention returns to the broader landscape of uncertainty, gold may regain its appeal as a store of value.

There is also a longer-term structural context to consider.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Today's generation

must know what

Assam before

2016 looked

like and what

it is today. You

may not have

experienced the

bad days but all

it takes is one

bad decision to

bring back those

dark days. Choose

wisely, Choose

Peace, Choose

Development,

Choose BJP. ~

Dr. Himanta Biswa

Sarma, Assam CM



The global financial system continues to grapple with high levels of debt, geopolitical fragmentation and questions about the durability of existing monetary arrangements.

These factors create a backdrop in which demand for assets perceived as independent of any single government or currency is likely to persist. Gold, despite its recent volatility, remains one of the few assets that fits this description.

The current episode, therefore, can be seen as a stress test rather than a definitive verdict. It exposes the vulnerabilities associated with excessive leverage and the ways in which market structure can distort price behaviour, even for assets with deep historical roots. At the same time, it underscores the importance of distinguishing between short-term dynamics and longer-term trends. While the decline from January's highs has been sharp, it does not necessarily invalidate the broader case for gold as a hedge against uncertainty.



'Congress Manifesto Lacks Vision, Party Won't Cross 20 Seats': Himanta Sarma in Upper Assam

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday intensified his campaign offensive against the Congress, dismissing its manifesto as "empty" and projecting a decisive victory for the BJP in the upcoming Assembly elections.

Addressing rallies in Sissiborgaon and Sadiya in Upper Assam, Sarma alleged that the Congress had failed to offer a clear roadmap for governance. "There is nothing in their manifesto that people can remember—no concrete promise on jobs, education, or development," he said.

Taking aim at the party's leadership, Sarma criticised the decision to have Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge unveil the manifesto in



Naoboicha, calling it "disrespectful" to Assam. He further accused Kharge and his son of making remarks that, he claimed, undermined the state's cultural identity and development initiatives.

Projecting the electoral outcome, the Chief Minister said the Congress would be restricted to 15-17 seats in the 126-member Assembly. He also predicted limited gains for other parties, asserting that voters had drawn clear contrasts between BJP governance and previous Congress rule. On the issue of justice in the case related to Zubeen Garg, Sarma reiterated that judicial processes cannot be dictated by political assurances. "Justice is delivered by courts, not by the Chief Minister," he said, rejecting opposition claims of fast-tracked resolutions.

He also invoked past delays in high-profile cases such as the Rajiv Gandhi assassination to question the Congress's track record on delivering justice.

Defending his government's role, Sarma said the administration had ensured that chargesheets were filed and that none of the accused in the Zubeen Garg case were out on bail. He accused the Opposition of misleading voters with "unrealistic promises" and emotional appeals.

Expressing confidence in a strong mandate, Sarma said the BJP was poised to win between 90 and 100 seats. He added that the party has intensified its outreach, covering key constituencies including Majuli, Naoboicha, Sissiborgaon and Sadiya, with further campaign events scheduled across Upper Assam.

No Shortage of Essentials in Tripura, Chief Secretary Warns Against Hoarding and Misinformation

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Secretary Jitender Kumar Sinha on Monday assured that the state has adequate stock of essential commodities, including petroleum products, urging citizens not to indulge in panic buying amid concerns over supply disruptions reported elsewhere in the country.

The assurance followed a high-level review meeting held at the state Secretariat to assess the availability and distribution of essential goods across Tripura. Senior officials briefed the Chief Secretary on the current supply position, indicating that the situation remains stable and under control.

Sinha emphasised that there is no cause for alarm, even as sporadic reports from other regions have triggered apprehensions. He directed all departments to remain vigilant and prepared to respond swiftly to any emerging challenges that could affect supply chains.

Highlighting the risks posed by misinformation, the Chief Secretary cautioned against the circulation of unverified or misleading content on social media platforms. He instructed officials to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of information to prevent unnecessary panic among the public.

Taking a firm stance against malpractice, Sinha warned of strict action against black marketing and hoarding of essential items. Authorities have been asked to intensify surveillance and enforcement measures to ensure fair distribution and prevent artificial scarcity.

The meeting was attended by senior officials, including Anurag and Dr P K Chakraborty, along with principal secretaries and heads of key departments.

BPF Unveils Assam Poll Manifesto, Reaffirms Support for BJP-Led NDA in BTC



KOKRAJHAR

The Bodoland People's Front (BPF) released its manifesto for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections, signalling a firm alignment with the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and projecting a strong electoral performance in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

The manifesto was unveiled at a campaign rally in Kashiabari under the Gossaigaon constituency by BPF president Hagrama Mohilary, who expressed confidence that the NDA would retain power in the state. He asserted that alliance candidates would sweep all 15 Assembly seats in the BTR.

Addressing party workers and

supporters, Mohilary said the party's vision document prioritises inclusive development across communities in the region. He underlined that eviction drives would not be carried out within the BTR, while indicating that such actions could continue in areas outside its jurisdiction.

The BPF also reiterated its support for granting Scheduled Tribe status to Koch-Rajbongshi and Advaisi communities, a long-pending demand in Assam's socio-political landscape.

In a sharp political broadside, Mohilary targeted the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), claiming the party would be "reduced to zero" in the BTR in the upcoming polls.

Reaffirming his backing for the BJP-led alliance, the BPF chief said he was confident that Himanta Biswa Sarma would return as Chief Minister, as campaigning gathers momentum across Assam ahead of the elections.

Assam Govt saddled with corruption, numerous scams: Supriya Shrinete

GUWAHATI

Congress leader Supriya Shrinete on Monday expressed confidence in her party's prospects in the upcoming Assam Assembly Elections 2026, while launching a sharp attack on the BJP-led state government.

Speaking with media, Shrinete alleged that the state government, led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has been marked by corruption and rising challenges for the people.

"We are very confident of performing very well in Assam because there has been a government that has been there for 10 years now—a BJP government, five years of which have been under Himanta Biswa Sarma. It is a government saddled with corruption, with numerous scams," she said.

She further alleged that the Chief Minister and his family had witnessed a sharp rise in assets



over the past decade, while the people of the state had not seen similar growth. "Himanta Biswa Sarma and his family have seen their assets grow at an astounding rate of 665 per cent in the last 10 years. The people of Assam have not witnessed similar prosperity," she claimed. Highlighting unemployment concerns, Shrinete said a large number of educated youth remain jobless.

"The young youth of Assam—21 lakh educated youth who have registered on the unemployment exchange—only 0.1 per cent are

finding jobs," she said.

She also raised concerns over the state's financial situation, alleging a significant debt burden.

"There is a huge debt burden on Assam of about Rs 2 lakh crore," she added. Expressing confidence in the electorate, Shrinete said people would vote for change in the upcoming elections.

"The people will decide decisively, and they will vote this government out of power. Arrogance, divisiveness and blatant corruption describe the last 10 years, particularly the last five," she said.

Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched a sharp attack on the Congress, accusing it of altering the state's demographics for vote-bank politics, while asserting that a BJP government would identify and deport "every infiltrator" within the next five years.

Addressing a public rally in Nalbari, Shah said, "Driven by the greed for vote banks, the Congress party changed the entire demographics of Assam. Dhubri and its nine surrounding districts are now teeming with infiltrators."

"He further alleged that previous Congress governments had allowed illegal infiltration for decades. "The Congress government had kept the doors open for infiltrators inside Assam for years. Our Chief Minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma, has shut the borders... and reclaimed 1.25 lakh acres of land that had been occupied by infiltrators," Shah said.

Ajmal Predicts Sarma's Defeat, Accuses BJP of 'Anti-Minority' Politics Ahead of Assam Polls

GUWAHATI

With campaigning entering its final phase, Badruddin Ajmal, president of the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), on Monday launched a sharp attack on Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, predicting his defeat in the upcoming Assembly elections.

Ajmal, who is contesting from the Binnakandi constituency, accused the BJP-led government of targeting minority communities and using divisive rhetoric during the campaign. He alleged that the ruling party's narrative was focused on singling out specific groups rather than addressing developmental priorities.

"There is a disturbing trend of targeting a particular community. We will continue to oppose such behaviour," Ajmal said, criticising what he described as derogatory



remarks aimed at sections of society.

The AIUDF leader also expressed confidence in his party's electoral

prospects in the April 9 polls, asserting that voters would respond to issues of governance and inclusion.

Highlighting his party's agenda,

Ajmal said AIUDF would focus on key concerns such as education, land rights, healthcare, political representation, the National Register of Citizens (NRC), and infrastructure projects, including deep water initiatives.

On potential political alignments, Ajmal indicated that the AIUDF would work closely with Asaduddin Owaisi during the elections, suggesting a coordinated strategy to consolidate support.

He also acknowledged that health issues had limited his campaign outreach, expressing regret over not being able to visit several constituencies. However, he said party workers remained active on the ground and voiced optimism about the outcome. The remarks add to the intensifying political contest in Assam, where parties are stepping up attacks and counter-attacks as polling day approaches.

Rupali Langthasa Eyes 20,000-Vote Margin in Haflong as BJP Steps Up Campaign



HAFLONG

BJP candidate Rupali Langthasa has expressed confidence of securing a decisive victory with a margin of 20,000 votes from the Haflong constituency as campaigning gathers pace in Assam's Dima Hasao district ahead of the Assam Assembly elections 2026.

With the election approaching, political activity has intensified across the hill district, with the Bharatiya Janata Party stepping up outreach efforts in multiple areas. While no major national or senior state leaders have visited the district so far, Chief Executive Member of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council, Debolal Gorlosa, has been actively campaigning in support of Langthasa.

Campaign programmes were held in Langting and Hatikhali under the autonomous council,

where party leaders highlighted development works undertaken over the past five years and expressed confidence in returning to power under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Dima Hasao BJP president Dhrity Thaosan criticised the Congress, claiming the party is in a weakened position with several leaders shifting allegiance to the BJP. He also downplayed the electoral prospects of the National People's Party, stating it lacks the strength to form a government.

Langthasa said BJP rallies across the district have drawn strong public response, reflecting growing support for the party. She maintained that even if Congress candidate Nandita Gorlosa enters the fray, it would not impact BJP's prospects, reiterating her claim of winning the seat by a margin of 20,000 votes.

"BJP will win more seats than 2021, Assam people have seen real development": Ajanta Neog

GOLAGHAT

Assam Finance Minister and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate from Golaghat constituency, Ajanta Neog, exuded confidence on Monday that the BJP will perform even better in the upcoming Assembly elections than it did in 2021.

She attributed this to the public's growing trust in the party's governance and development record over the last five years.

"We are extremely confident that the Bharatiya Janata Party will win even more seats than in 2021. Over the last five years, the people of Assam have seen real development and stability. This growing trust will translate into a stronger mandate," Neog said.

Highlighting the role of women voters, she added that the turnout is expected to be high, with significant participation from women.

"This time, the vote percentage will be high and more than 60% of the vote, and women voters will also cast their ballots exclusively for the BJP. Our government has focused heavily on women's empowerment through self-help groups, financial inclusion, and welfare schemes like the Lakhpati Didi initiative," she said.

Responding to allegations from the Opposition, Neog asserted that the results



would reflect public sentiment. "On May 4th, the Indian National Congress will realise how the public has responded to the false allegations made against our Chief Minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma. The people of Assam know the truth and have witnessed the work on the ground," she said.

She also pointed to the state's economic progress, noting that Assam's budget under the BJP-led government has surged to approximately Rs 1,50,000 crore from Rs 40,000 crore during the Congress regime. "This reflects economic growth, improved revenue, and better governance," she added.

When asked about major development work done in the last five years, Neog cited major infrastructure projects and flood mitigation measures as tangible outcomes

of the government's efforts.

"Significant development has taken place across Assam—from major road construction projects to strong flood mitigation measures. These are real, tangible results that people can see and benefit from every day," she said.

On the BJP's criticism of Congress, she said that voters are now focused on performance. "For decades, the Congress ruled Assam but failed to bring meaningful transformation. Today's voters demand results, not promises. People are fully aware of what Congress has—or hasn't—achieved in the last 60 years," she said.

The Finance Minister also highlighted industrial development and job creation. "Our government has established multiple industrial units and created an environ-

ment that encourages investment. This has boosted employment and strengthened Assam's economy," she said.

Emphasising women's political participation, Neog urged greater engagement. "While winning candidates are important, women's representation must increase. Women should enter politics with seriousness and actively engage in public service. Their leadership is essential for balanced and inclusive governance," Neog said.

She further outlined initiatives for financial empowerment, saying, "We have done substantial work through self-help groups and schemes like Lakhpati Didi. Most importantly, we have completely waived loans for beneficiaries of the micro-finance scheme, bringing relief and financial independence to thousands of families." Ajanta Neog, representing the Golaghat constituency, has held this seat since 2001, originally as a member of the Indian National Congress (INC) before joining the BJP in 2020. She is contesting against Bitupan Saikia from Congress in the 2026 Assam Assembly polls.

In the 2021 Assam Assembly elections, Ajanta Neog won the Golaghat seat with 81,651 votes, defeating Bitupan Saikia, who secured 72,326 votes, with a winning margin of 9,325 votes.

Assam will witness a fight between the incumbent BJP-led NDA government and Congress for the 126-seat assembly. The BJP government, led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, will look to secure a third consecutive term, while the Congress aims to defeat the ruling party to return to power.

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TMC moves HC against EC over transfers of more than 250 govt officers in a single day in poll-bound Bengal



(DGP) Peeyush Pandey, additional director general (ASG) of police, commissioner of police, Kolkata and others.

A source in the office of the state CEO said, "Transfers of bureaucrats, IPS officers and other administrative officials, who are directly involved in the election process, are nothing new and these initiatives are taken ahead of every election so that people can cast their voting rights freely in an atmosphere without fear and favour."

"This time the Commission has decided to take drastic steps if any officer is found showing partisan roles while carrying out his or her duty in the elections," he said requesting anonymity. Earlier this week, the national poll panel had appointed ROs in 73 assembly constituencies, including the high-profile Bhabanipur seat.

The removal of the RO in Bhabanipur had prompted Mamata to question the neutrality of the Commission. The commission appointed Surajit Roy, a BDO from Nandigram, as RO in Bhabanipur. The TMC had alleged that Roy had links with Suwendu and had lodged an official complaint with the ECI. However, in another reshuffle, carried out late Thursday night, 14 officers were removed across nine districts in the state. These officials had been appointed only last Monday, making their removal within five days a significant and unusual administrative move.

and districts across the state 23 days before the upcoming assembly polls in the state. The two-phase assembly polls in 294 constituencies in the state will be held on April 23 and 29.

Significantly, the OCs of 31 police stations in Kolkata have been removed. The highest number of 14 BDOs and AROs have been transferred in East Midnapore district, while in South 24 Parganas the figure is 11.

Two BDOs and AROs have been removed in the Nandigram assembly constituency in East Midnapore where Suwendu Adhikari, Leader of the Opposition and BJP MLA, has been nominated by the party again for the second time after 2021 when he had defeated the CM Mamata Banerjee by around 2000 votes.

Earlier, the commission had transferred numerous senior bureaucrats, including chief secretary Nandini Chakraborty and home secretary J.P. Meena, and IPS officers like director general of police

KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress MP and lawyer Kalyan Banerjee on Monday moved the Calcutta High Court against the Election Commission of India (ECI) after it removed officers-in-charge (OCs) of 170 police stations, including Bhabanipur where West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is a candidate, and block development officers (BDOs) and assistant returning officers (AROs) of 83 blocks ahead of the assembly polls in the state.

The petition has been filed in the court of Chief Justice Sujoy Paul and the hearing is likely to be held on Tuesday.

Mamata has been alleging that administrative power had been "snatched" from her hands through the regular transfers of officers by the Commission, which she claimed was done at the behest of the BJP.

The ECI on Sunday removed 174 OCs and 83 BDOs cum AROs in the city

Naxalism 'almost completely' eradicated from Bastar: Amit Shah tells LS ahead of March 31 deadline



NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday accused the Congress of inaction against Naxal violence during its tenure, while declaring that Maoists have been almost eradicated now from their den Bastar in Chhattisgarh.

Speaking during the debate in the Lok Sabha on 'Efforts to free the country from left-wing extremism (LWE)', Shah claimed that 12 states had turned into the Red Corridor with no rule of law.

He said 12 crore people lived in poverty for years and 20,000 people, including 5,000 security personnel, were killed due to the Naxal violence.

"In the end, who is responsible for this. I want to ask, in 75 years, you ruled for 60 years, why have the tribals still been deprived of development? The development of tribals is now being done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.



Shah alleged that for 60 years, the Congress "did not give the tribals houses, didn't give them water, didn't build

schools, didn't extend bank facilities."

"So first look a little into your own reign and see who is

at fault," he said in response to some opposition members blaming the Modi government for the violence.

Shah said the then prime minister Manmohan Singh had acknowledged that Naxalism was a bigger challenge than the Kashmir and North-East problems before the nation, but the "Congress did nothing about it."

The debate was held a day before the deadline declared by Shah for the elimination of Naxal violence in the country.

The home minister said that the development in Bastar had stalled because the shadow of red terror loomed there.

"Now this shadow is lifting, and Bastar is developing," he claimed while lauding security forces and tribals for the success against the Naxals.

"The biggest achievement of the Modi government is a Naxal-free India; any researcher will accept this," he said.

He said those advocating Naxalism should know that people who take up arms will have to pay a price.

The solution for addressing injustice is prescribed in the Constitution.

Taking up arms is not the answer, he said.

"Today, Naxalism has been almost completely eradicated from Bastar. A campaign was launched to build a school in every village in Bastar. A campaign was launched to open ration shops in every village in Bastar," he said.

Shah also said that all credit for the success against the Maoists goes to the Central Armed Police Forces personnel, especially the brave soldiers of Cobra and CRPF, security agencies, Chhattisgarh Police, DRG personnel and tribal inhabitants.

INTERNATIONAL

Nepal's Supreme Court refuses interim relief to former PM Oli as protests continue over his arrest

KATHMANDU

Nepal's Supreme Court on Monday refused to provide interim relief to former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, arrested over the 2025 Gen Z movement crackdown, even as protests continued in Nepal over his detention.

Oli and former home minister Ramesh Lekhak were arrested on Saturday for their alleged involvement in suppressing the Gen Z movement of September 8 and 9 last year, in which 76 people were killed.

In response to a habeas corpus petition filed by Oli's wife, Radhika Shakya, claiming her husband's detention is unlawful, a single bench of Justice Meghraj Pokharel refused to issue an interim order for Oli's release.

The apex court instead asked the authorities to submit a written explanation clarifying the legal grounds for his detention.

The court gave a similar ruling to a habeas corpus petition filed on behalf of former home minister Ramesh Lekhak.

The arrests came after the newly formed Balendra Shah government decided to implement the report of the probe commission into the Gen Z protests in its first cabinet meeting.

Hundreds of members of Oli's Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and their sister organisations and student wings gathered at Naya Baneshwor area on Monday morning carrying placards that read "Immediately release KP Oli," and "End the politics of revenge."

Monday's protest rally was comparatively peaceful, unlike the protests organised by the party on Saturday and Sunday. On Sunday, over a dozen UML cadres were



injured as they clashed with the riot police.

Oli and Lekhak were sent to judicial custody for five days by the Kathmandu District Court on Sunday. He is currently undergoing medical treatment at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Maharajgunj, Kathmandu, as his health conditions deteriorated when he was taken to the hospital on Saturday for a health check-up following the arrest. He will remain in the hospital during his five-day custody. In another development, Nepal's Department of Money Laundering Investigation (DMLI) and Nepal police have intensified probe against former prime min-

isters Sher Bahadur Deuba, KP Sharma Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal after the arrest of a former minister Deepak Khadka.

Before upgrading the case to a detailed investigation, the department had conducted preliminary enquiries for nearly six months, The Kathmandu Post reported.

The investigation was formally intensified after discrepancies were identified during that period, prompting authorities to widen the scope of scrutiny, the report said.

Former energy minister and Nepali Congress leader Deepak Khadka, arrested on Sunday in connection with a money laundering case, was admitted to Tribhuvan

University Teaching Hospital in Maharajgunj on Monday after complaining of health problems.

He was accused of receiving financial benefits in exchange for facilitating licences and contracts for projects while serving as the Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation.

During the Gen Z protest last year, images and videos had surfaced showing burnt fragments of banknotes at the residences of Khadka and former prime ministers Sher Bahadur Deuba and Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

The findings were reportedly later confirmed through forensic laboratory tests.

Trump threatens to 'completely obliterate' Iran's energy infrastructure if deal is not reached 'shortly'

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump on Monday said the United States will "completely obliterate" all of Iran's energy resources and other vital infrastructure, if the Strait of Hormuz is not opened "immediately". Trump also said the US will seize Iran's Kharg Island, its main oil terminal in the Persian Gulf.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump said the US was engaged in what he termed as "serious discussions" with a "new, and more reasonable" leadership in Iran aimed at ending US military operations there.

Trump added that the discussions have made "great progress", but if for any reason a "deal is not shortly reached" and if the Strait of Hormuz is not immediately "Open for Business," the US would conclude their "lovely stay" in Iran by "blowing up and completely obliterating" all of Iran's electric generating plants and oil wells.

The US President said the action will be in "retribution" to the US soldiers and others that Iran has "butchered" and killed over 47 years of "reign of terror".

On the ground, the war showed no sign of letting up: Tehran struck a key water and electrical plant in Kuwait, and an oil refinery in Israel came under attack. Israel and the US launched a new wave of strikes on Iran.

Trump's social media post and earlier comments in an interview with the Financial Times



that suggested American troops could seize the country's Kharg Island export hub highlight how he has repeatedly said that talks with Iran are ongoing — and even going well — though Tehran denies negotiating directly. But at the same time, he has continually ramped up his threats, as thousands more Marines and other US troops pour into the Middle East.

"Maybe we take Kharg Island, maybe we don't. We have a lot of options," Trump told Financial

Times. "It would also mean we had to be there (on Kharg Island) for a while." Asked about Iranian defences there, he said: "I don't think they have any defense. We could take it very easily."

The US already launched airstrikes once it said targeted military positions on the island.

Iran has threatened to launch its own ground invasion of Gulf Arab countries and new attacks if US troops land on its territory.

Assam Assembly Elections 2026: From Tezpur to Silchar, Battleground Seats That Could Decide the Verdict

With barely a week remaining for the 2026 Assam Assembly elections, the political temperature across North Assam, Central Assam, and the Barak Valley is rising sharply. These regions—marked by a mix of legacy constituencies, newly redrawn seats, and shifting political loyalties—are emerging as decisive theatres where the larger electoral narrative of the state may be written.

From the culturally resonant constituency of Tezpur to the politically strategic Silchar in the Barak Valley, a series of high-stakes contests are unfolding. Multi-cornered battles, high-profile defections, evolving alliance strategies, and changing voter behaviour have made these constituencies far more than local contests—they are now barometers of Assam's broader political direction.

This second part of a key constituency analysis maps the contests that are likely to influence not just regional outcomes but the overall balance of power in Dispur.

North Assam: Legacy, Loyalty, and Fragmented Opposition

Dhekiajuli: A Minister on Trial
In Sonitpur district, Dhekiajuli has become a litmus test for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) governance narrative. Sitting MLA and senior cabinet minister Ashok Singhal is seeking re-election, carrying with him the weight of incumbency and a formidable electoral track record.

In the 2021 elections, Singhal secured a commanding victory, polling over 93,000 votes and capturing more than 56 percent of the vote share. His margin of victory—exceeding 35,000 votes—firmly established the BJP's dominance in the constituency.

However, the 2026 contest introduces new variables. The Congress has fielded Batash Orang, a former BJP member, who has not only mounted a direct challenge but also raised procedural objections to Singhal's nomination, adding an additional layer of political tension.

Dhekiajuli thus stands at the intersection of continuity and contestation. While the BJP retains a structural advantage due to its previous mandate and organisational strength, the presence of a familiar face in the opposition camp and localised grievances could test the depth of its support.

Tezpur: Legacy Politics Meets Electoral Arithmetic

Tezpur, often regarded as the cultural heartland of North Assam, presents a complex electoral puzzle. The constituency is witnessing a multi-layered contest shaped by legacy, alliance politics, and internal dissent within opposition ranks.

The incumbent, Prithiraj Rava of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), is contesting as part of the BJP-led alliance. His candidature carries symbolic weight, being the son of cultural icon Bishnu Prasad Rabha. This legacy has historically influenced voter sentiment in Tezpur, blending cultural reverence with political loyalty.

Rava's 2021 victory, secured with over 71,000 votes and a margin exceeding 10,000, reaffirmed AGP's continued relevance in the constituency despite the BJP's overarching dominance in the alliance.

The Opposition, however, has attempted consolidation by backing Rajjor Dal candidate Alok Nath as a consensus nominee. Yet, this strategy has been undermined by internal discord. Pallabi Saikia's decision to enter the fray as an independent after disagreements over seat-sharing has fractured the anti-incumbent vote base. With an electorate of nearly 1.9 lakh voters, Tezpur's outcome may hinge on marginal vote shifts. The BJP-led alliance enters the race with a slight edge, bolstered by incumbency and legacy appeal. But the possibility of opposition consolidation—if it materialises effectively—keeps the contest competitive. Central Assam: Identity, Delimitation, and Strategic Realignments

Binnakandi: Ajmal's Stronghold Faces Its Toughest Test

The newly carved Binnakandi constituency in Hojai district has rapidly become one of the most closely watched contests in the state. Its prominence stems largely from the entry of AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal, whose political fortunes are deeply tied to this region.

Never expect, never assume, never ask, and never demand. Just let it be. If it is meant to be, it will happen.



Formed after delimitation from parts of the erstwhile Jamunamukh constituency, Binnakandi lies within a demographic zone where the AIUDF has historically enjoyed strong support, particularly among minority voters. Since 2006, the Ajmal family has maintained a firm grip over this political landscape.

However, the 2026 election presents a departure from past trends. Ajmal now faces a consolidated opposition in the form of Rejaul Karim Chowdhury of the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), backed by a broader Congress-led alliance. The NDA has fielded AGP's Sahabuddin Mazumder, adding another layer to the contest.

Compounding the challenge for Ajmal is the AIUDF's underwhelming performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, which has raised questions about the party's ability to retain its core vote base.

Binnakandi is thus more than just a constituency—it is a referendum on Ajmal's enduring influence. While his deep-rooted networks remain a significant asset, the opposition's unified approach makes this one of the most finely balanced contests in the state.

Dhing: A Bastion Under Pressure
Dhing has long been regarded as a stronghold of the AIUDF, particularly after its emphatic performance in 2021. Then, the party secured a landslide victory with over 70 percent vote share and a margin surpassing one lakh votes, underscoring its dominance among minority voters.

In 2026, however, the political equations have shifted. The contest is now primarily between AIUDF candidate Matjur Rahman and Rajjor Dal's Mehboob Muktar, who has emerged as the consensus opposition candidate. The BJP has fielded Dr. Mukut Kumar Debnath, while additional candidates further fragment the electoral field.

What makes Dhing particularly significant is its role as a testing ground for opposition unity. The coordinated effort to prevent vote splitting among anti-AIUDF forces could fundamentally alter the constituency's electoral dynamics.

For the AIUDF, retaining Dhing is crucial to demonstrating that its core support base remains intact despite changing political currents. For the opposition, a breakthrough here would signal the effectiveness of its consolidation strategy.

Nagaon-Batadrava: A New Seat, A New Narrative

The Nagaon-Batadrava constituency represents one of the most significant outcomes of Assam's recent delimitation exercise. By merging the

former Nowgong and Batadrava constituencies, it has created an entirely new electoral unit with nearly 2 lakh voters and a reconfigured demographic profile.

This absence of historical voting patterns makes the contest inherently unpredictable. The main battle is between BJP candidate Rupak Sarmah and Congress veteran Durlav Chamua, representing the opposition alliance. However, the contest extends beyond conventional electoral arithmetic.

A central theme in this constituency is the redevelopment of the Batadrava Than, the birthplace of Srimanta Sankardev, a towering figure in Assam's cultural and spiritual history. The BJP has foregrounded this project as part of its broader emphasis on cultural identity and heritage politics.

This framing transforms Nagaon-Batadrava into a symbolic battleground where development, identity, and political messaging intersect.

While the BJP appears to hold an organisational advantage, the novelty of the constituency and the absence of entrenched voting patterns make the outcome difficult to predict. It remains one of the most closely watched seats in Central Assam.

Barak Valley: Urban Stakes and Political Realignments
Silchar: The Urban Test Case
Silchar, the political and commercial hub of the Barak Valley, continues to be a key battleground with implications beyond its geographic boundaries.

The contest here is primarily bipolar, with BJP candidate Rajdeep Roy facing Congress nominee Abhijit Paul. In 2021, the BJP secured a decisive victory, winning by a margin of over 37,000 votes—an outcome that reflected strong consolidation of urban voters.

In 2026, however, the Congress is attempting a comeback by leveraging legacy networks associated with the late Santosh Mohan Dev and rebuilding its grassroots presence.

Silchar's urban electorate, often more responsive to governance issues, infrastructure, and economic concerns, adds complexity to the contest. While the BJP enters as the frontrunner due to past performance and organisational strength, the Congress's efforts to mobilise anti-incumbency sentiment could narrow the gap.

The outcome here will serve as an indicator of whether the BJP can sustain its urban dominance in the Barak Valley or if the Congress is regaining lost ground.

Katigora: Politics of Defection and Discontent

Few constituencies encapsulate the fluidity of Assam's current political landscape as vividly as Katigora. The seat has become a stage for

dramatic political reversals, with both major candidates representing opposing trajectories of defection. The BJP has fielded Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha, a prominent former Congress leader, while the Congress has nominated Amar Chand Jain, who has made the reverse switch.

This "turncoat versus turncoat" contest underscores the growing centrality of individual political capital over party identity.

However, the Congress faces deeper challenges. Its decision to deny renomination to sitting MLA Khalil Uddin Mazumder—who had secured over 51 percent vote share in 2021—has triggered internal unrest. Protests by party workers and the possibility of organisational sabotage threaten to weaken its electoral prospects.

Katigora's importance is amplified by its location within the Silchar parliamentary segment, making it a strategic seat in the broader contest for dominance in the Barak Valley.

At present, the BJP appears to hold a slight advantage, largely due to organisational cohesion and the absence of visible internal dissent. The Congress, meanwhile, must navigate factionalism and credibility issues if it hopes to remain competitive.

The Broader Picture: A State in Flux
Taken together, these constituencies reveal a state in political transition. Several key themes emerge:

Delimitation has reshaped electoral realities, particularly in seats like Binnakandi and Nagaon-Batadrava, where traditional voting patterns no longer apply.

Opposition unity remains uneven, with successes in some constituencies but fractures in others, such as Tezpur and Katigora.

Legacy and identity politics continue to influence outcomes, especially in culturally significant regions.

Defections and candidate-centric politics are increasingly prominent, reflecting a shift away from rigid party loyalties.

As Assam heads toward polling day, these battleground constituencies will not only determine local winners but also signal broader trends—whether incumbency holds, whether opposition consolidation succeeds, and how voters respond to competing narratives of development, identity, and governance.

In a tightly contested election, it is these micro-battles—from Dhekiajuli to Silchar—that may ultimately shape the macro verdict.

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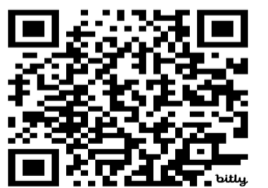
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