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## Two High-Intensity IEDs Recovered in Manipur's Bishnupur Weeks After Deadly Blast

**IMPHAL**  
Security forces recovered two high-intensity improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from separate abandoned houses in Manipur's Bishnupur district on Monday, weeks after a deadly explosion in the same area killed two children, officials said. The explosives were discovered inside two houses belonging to members of the Meitei community at Tronglaobi Maning Leikai Guru Khana village under the jurisdiction of Moirang Police Station.

Tronglaobi village, which earlier had around 50 households, was largely abandoned after ethnic violence erupted in Manipur on May 3, 2023, triggering widespread arson and displacement. Police officials said residents had recently started returning to the village to clean and repair their homes as part of ongoing peace and rehabilitation efforts initiated by the state government. After receiving information about the suspected explosives, Moirang police sought assistance from the CID (Technical) Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS).

The BDS team later reached the village and safely defused both IEDs at around 12.45 pm on Monday. "The two bombs were successfully diffused and later handed over to Moirang police station for further investigation," a senior police officer said. Local residents alleged that suspected militants may have planted the explosives to intimidate families attempting to return and resettle in the village. "While we were cleaning the surroundings of our homes a few days ago, some armed men suspected to be militants saw us. They might have planted the bombs to warn us against resettling in the area," a villager claimed.

### WHO SAID WHAT



**ABVP is not BJP's student wing ~ Samik Bhattacharya, BJP West Bengal State President, MP (RS)**

The group further warned that if the visit goes ahead, any untoward incident or confrontation arising during the programme would be the responsibility of those organising or supporting it. Reiterating its

### GUWAHATI

After a momentous victory in the assembly elections, Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday took oath as the Chief Minister of Assam for a second term.

The oath-taking ceremony, held at the Veterinary College ground in Khanapara, was graced by the auspicious presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP President Nitin Nabin, senior Union ministers, and chief ministers and deputy chief ministers from several NDA-ruled states.

This will be the third NDA government in Assam.

Along with Sarma, four ministers - two from the BJP and one each from its allies Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF) - were also sworn in. They include Rameswar Teli, Atul Bora (AGP), Charan Boro (BPF) and Ajanta Neog. Former minister and se-



nior BJP leader Ranjeet Kumar Dass will be the NDA's candidate for the position of Speaker of the state Assembly.

The NDA's performance in

the Assam assembly elections 2026 was nothing short of a masterclass in electoral dominance. By securing a three-fourths majority, securing 81 Assembly

seats out of the total 126 seats, the alliance has sent a clear message about the resonance of its governance model.

The BJP-led NDA, includ-

ing the Bodoland Peoples Front (BPF) and Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), collectively secured 101 Assembly seats in Assam, which makes up to be three-fourth majority. Bodoland Peoples Front and Asom Gana Parishad won ten seats each as a part of the NDA.

The day was defined by two polar opposite narratives: the unstoppable rise of the incumbent Chief Minister and the shocking eclipse of a political dynasty.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma turned his constituency into a fortress, winning by a staggering margin of over 80,000 votes. In his victory speech, he credited the "double-engine" growth fueled by PM Narendra Modi's support over the last decade. The 2026 election will be remembered as the moment Assam moved away from regional and sectarian fragmentation, opting instead for a direct, polarised contest between the BJP's vision of "transformation" and the Congress's ideological resistance.

## UKNA Opposes Manipur CM's Proposed Churachandpur Visit, Warns of Tensions



### CHURACHANDPUR

The United Kuki National Army has strongly opposed the proposed visit of Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh to Churachandpur district on May 15, warning that the move would be considered "highly provocative and unacceptable" by the Kuki community. In a statement issued on May 11, the UKNA called on village chiefs, community leaders and civil society organisations in Kuki-dominated areas to remain vigilant and coordinated ahead of the proposed programme.

The outfit said no individual or organisation should cooperate in facilitating the Chief Minister's entry into what it described as "frontline areas."

The group further warned that if the visit goes ahead, any untoward incident or confrontation arising during the programme would be the responsibility of those organising or supporting it. Reiterating its

political demand, the UKNA called again for a Separate Administration or a Union Territory with Legislature for the Kuki-Zo people. It also cautioned against attempts by Meitei leaders or organisations to enter Kuki-majority areas until a political resolution is achieved. The statement additionally urged government employees and state service personnel from the community to place what it termed their "national duty" above official responsibilities linked to the Chief Minister's proposed visit. Meanwhile, the Kuki National Organisation and the Zomi Re-unification Organisation reportedly resolved during a joint meeting held on May 11 not to participate in or support any programme connected to the Chief Minister's proposed visit to Churachandpur. The latest development comes amid continuing ethnic tensions and political uncertainty in Manipur following the outbreak of violence between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities in May 2023.

## Man Detained With Live Bullets During Security Check at Assam Swearing-In Venue

### GUWAHATI

A man was taken into custody on Tuesday after security personnel allegedly recovered several rounds of live ammunition from him during screening at the venue of the Assam government's swearing-in ceremony in Guwahati, police officials said.

The incident occurred at the Veterinary College Field in Khanapara, where Himanta Biswa Sarma was scheduled to take oath as Chief Minister for a second consecutive term.

According to police, the ammunition was detected during routine frisking and baggage checks at one of the entry points to the high-security venue. "He was taken into custody for questioning and is being taken to Basistha police station," a police officer said.

Officials said no firearm or any other weapon was recovered from the individual during the search operation.

Police have launched an investigation to determine how the man came into possession of the live bullets and whether the incident had any potential security implications. The recovery came shortly before Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya was scheduled to administer the oath of office and secrecy to Himanta Biswa Sarma and members of the new Council of Ministers. The swearing-in ceremony witnessed the presence of top national leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, and Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari.

More than 40 chief ministers and deputy chief ministers from NDA-ruled states were also in attendance at the ceremony in Guwahati.

## Manipur Governor Praises Researcher Albert Rajkumar's Lunar Robotics Project on National Technology Day



### IMPHAL

Ajay Kumar Bhalla has lauded the achievements of Manipuri researcher Albert Rajkumar for his pioneering work on human-robot collaboration for lunar infrastructure development, describing it as a reflection of the innovation and resilience of the state's youth.

Marking National Technology Day, the Governor highlighted Rajkumar's work in a Facebook post on Monday, praising his contributions to advanced space research at the University of Adelaide in Australia. Bhalla said Rajkumar's journey from Manipur to the global space research community serves as an inspiration for young people to "dream bigger, innovate fearlessly, and shape the technologies of tomorrow."

Rajkumar is currently presenting his research at the Australian Rover Challenge 2026, where his work focuses on developing ex-

tended reality-based simulation tools for construction in extreme lunar environments.

One of the key components of his research is "SIDE QUEST," an immersive virtual reality platform designed to enable collaboration between humans and robotic systems under simulated lunar conditions. The project aims to explore how coordinated human-robot systems could be used to build sustainable infrastructure for future space missions beyond Earth. A PhD researcher and space architect, Rajkumar combines expertise in architecture, robotics and extended reality technologies to study extraterrestrial habitats and future space infrastructure. He previously studied at the School of Planning and Architecture and the University of Houston. The Governor also linked such innovations to India's broader scientific progress, citing initiatives such as the National Quantum Mission as examples of the country's increasing emphasis on emerging technologies and research-driven development.

Bhalla said National Technology Day is an opportunity to recognise the contributions of scientists, engineers, innovators and young researchers in advancing nation-building and shaping a technology-driven future for the country.

# Assam Set for Rs 2 Lakh Crore Infrastructure Push: Gadkari



### GUWAHATI

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday said infrastructure projects worth nearly Rs 2 lakh crore are in the pipeline for Assam, asserting that the BJP-led government under Himanta Biswa Sarma would continue accelerating the State's development agenda after securing a third consecutive mandate.

Speaking to reporters upon his arrival in Guwahati ahead of Sarma's oath-taking ceremony, Gadkari said the people of Assam had once again reposed faith in the Bharatiya Janata Party and the National Democratic Alliance, expressing confidence that the government would fulfil public expectations.

"The trust that the people of Assam have shown in the BJP for the third time will be justified. Assam will con-

tinue to develop," Gadkari said.

Highlighting the Centre's infrastructure roadmap for the State, the Union minister said his ministry alone has lined up projects worth close to Rs 2 lakh crore.

"From my department alone, projects worth nearly Rs 2 lakh crore are in the pipeline. We will contribute towards making Assam progressive, prosperous, and economically stronger," he added.

The remarks came ahead of the swearing-in ceremony of Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is set to take oath as Chief Minister for a second consecutive term as the BJP-led NDA begins its third straight tenure in Assam.

Sarma was unanimously elected leader of the BJP and NDA Legislature Parties during a meeting attended by senior leaders of alliance partners, including the Asom Gana Parishad and the Bodoland People's

Front.

Ahead of the ceremony, Sarma announced that senior leaders Rameswar Teli, Atul Bora, Chandra Mohan Patowary, and Ajanta Neog would take oath as ministers alongside him. He also named Ranjit Das as the NDA's candidate for Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly.

The NDA returned to power with a decisive mandate in the recently concluded Assam Assembly elections, winning 102 seats in the 126-member Assembly. The BJP secured 82 seats, while its allies AGP and BPF won 10 seats each.

The opposition alliance led by the Indian National Congress managed 19 seats. Rajiour Dal and the All India United Democratic Front won two seats each, while the All India Trinamool Congress secured one seat. The Assam Jatiya Parishad failed to win any seat in the election.



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## WHAT HAS THE IRAN-ISRAEL WAR LEFT BEHIND?

**W**ars seldom conclude with the cessation of bombings, even if the artillery may become quiet and an arsenal is reached. A comprehensive examination of the entire Iran-Israel conflict, exacerbated by U.S. involvement, leads us to the conclusion that the war has not yielded any definitive victory. However, it has resulted in a destabilised Middle East, a strained global economy, and, importantly, a more unpredictable international order.

The Iran-Israel conflict could be more accurately described as a war without resolution, showcasing the inherent limitations of military power. The primary aim of the war, which was to curb Iran's nuclear aspirations or dismantle its regional influence, remains unachieved despite significant strikes that have impaired Iran's military infrastructure—the outcome is an unwarranted stalemate characterised by volatility, which poses a risk of re-ignition. It is volatility, rather than victory, that this war has bequeathed.

As Carl von Clausewitz stated, "War is a continuation of politics by other means." Yet, this conflict has weakened the political deadlock. Furthermore, the destruction throughout the Middle East is palpable. Additionally, fragile diplomatic initiatives have been obstructed, rivalries are intensifying, and military expenditures are skyrocketing. Although Iran has been weakened, it has intensified its reliance on indirect strategies. This reality serves as a reminder that contemporary power is measured not solely by military might but also by influence. Regarding human resources, while difficult to quantify, their significance cannot be overlooked. This is not merely a conclusion—global oil markets have been disrupted, supply chains strained, and economies—particularly in energy-dependent countries—have faced mounting pressure. Most importantly, the state of the world order is of great concern. International institutions have struggled to respond effectively, and major powers remain at odds.

The closure of the Iran-Israel war does not signify a definitive end; rather, it can be viewed as a frozen conflict characterised by ongoing hostility without a clear resolution. This unresolved conclusion may represent its most perilous legacy. It guarantees that escalation is not merely a possibility for the future—it is a likelihood. Undoubtedly, this conflict has transformed regional geopolitics in ways that could endure for decades. Attempts to normalise relations between Israel and Arab nations have been hindered, while regional powers are intensifying military build-ups in reaction to perceived threats.

Iran, utilising proxy networks and asymmetric strategies, has weakened militarily yet shown resilience—ranging from missile strikes to indirect influence across borders. Iran's approach indicates a transition from conventional warfare to sustained strategic pressure. Consequently, the Middle East is increasingly characterised by overlapping rivalries rather than alliances—an unstable equilibrium where mistrust prevails in diplomatic relations.

Insofar as humanitarian and social impacts are concerned, beyond the geopolitical landscape, the war has inflicted profound human consequences. Civilian populations in the affected areas have faced displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and long-term health hazards due to environmental degradation. Moreover, it has potentially instigated new waves of migration and social unrest in neighbouring countries. These are not transient injuries; such conflicts embed trauma within societies, influencing political attitudes and shaping generational perceptions of warfare.

Furthermore, the economic impacts of the war have reached well beyond the battlefield. Disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz—through which a considerable portion of global oil is transported—have unsettled energy markets and caused price fluctuations. As an alternative response, shipping routes have been redirected, trade expenses have increased, and global supply chains have faced significant strain. For numerous nations, including India, this results in increased fuel costs, inflationary pressures, and economic instability. It is important to note that in a highly interconnected world, regional conflicts no longer remain confined to their areas. Palpably, Globalisation and Glocalisation have united nations, and as a result of disputes between any two countries, the entire globe experiences perceptible effects. Clearly, the conflict has involved a combination of cyber operations, proxy militias, information warfare, and targeted strikes. Another lasting consequence is the normalisation of hybrid warfare. This approach obscures the distinction between war and peace. Violence no longer necessitates formal declarations—it occurs in secrecy, across borders, and through networks that are challenging to trace or counter. Lastly, the most significant impact may be on the international system itself. The war has strained alliances, revealed rifts among major powers, and diminished trust in diplomatic processes. Global public opinion indicates a rising war fatigue—majorities in numerous countries advocating for non-involvement. Consequently, the divide between political choices and public opinion is expanding. In summary, it can be asserted that the Iran-Israel war has not concluded—it has simply transformed. It leaves a fragile and militarised Middle East, a strained global economy, an escalating humanitarian crisis, and a weakened international order. History may not recall this conflict for its victors, but for how it reshaped the region—and the world—into a state of greater uncertainty, division, and volatility.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

A mind is like a parachute. It doesn't work if it is not open.

- Frank Zappa

# WEST BENGAL AND THE RECASTING OF POLITICAL POWER IN INDIA



B S DARA

The recent electoral developments in West Bengal are not an isolated political event. They reflect a deeper transformation in India's political landscape, where the balance between regional leadership and national consolidation is steadily shifting.

What was once considered an impregnable political fortress has, over time, been opened to contest. Bharatiya Janata Party's rise and advance into eastern India, long defined by entrenched ideological dominance, particularly into West Bengal, marks the breaching of a long-held frontier in Indian politics. For decades under Left rule, the state stood as a closed domain where the BJP had neither structure nor significance. That distance has now been decisively narrowed.

To understand the present, it is necessary to trace the past. For nearly three decades, West Bengal was governed by the Left Front, led primarily by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). From 1977 to 2011, the state remained under Left rule, one of the longest-serving democratically elected communist governments in the world. During this period, the BJP had virtually no presence in the state. Its ideological framework and organisational network found little resonance in a political culture shaped by class-based mobilisation, trade union influence, and agrarian reforms. The political landscape began to change in the late 2000s. The Left Front, after years of dominance, faced growing criticism over industrial policies, particularly the handling of land acquisition in Singur and Nandigram. These events created a political opening that was effectively utilised by Mamata Banerjee and her party, the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC). In 2011, Mamata Banerjee ended the 34-year Left rule and emerged as the central figure in West Bengal's politics. Her rise was rooted in a strong regional narrative. She positioned herself as a leader of the people, speaking directly to local concerns and projecting resistance to both the Left's institutional rigidity and the BJP's national expansion. Over time, her governance style became increasingly centralised, and the TMC established itself as the dominant political force in the state.

For several years, West Bengal appeared politically settled. The BJP remained a marginal player. In the 2011 Assembly elections, the party secured only a small vote share, and its organisational footprint was limited. However, this phase did not reflect stagnation but preparation. The BJP's approach to expansion in states where it lacked historical presence has been consistent. It does not depend solely on immediate electoral success. Instead, it invests in building grassroots networks, strengthening booth-level organisation, and identifying social coalitions that can be mobilised over time. This method, applied across multiple states, began to show results in West Bengal as well.

The 2014 general elections marked the first visible shift. The BJP increased its vote share in the state, signalling that it was no longer absent from the political conversation. This trend accelerated in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, where the party won 18 out of 42 seats from West Bengal, a dramatic rise from its earlier position. Its vote share crossed 40 percent, indicating a substantial consolidation of support.

The 2021 Assembly elections further demonstrated the scale of this transformation. Although the TMC retained power with a decisive man-

date, winning over 200 seats, the BJP emerged as the principal opposition with 77 seats. This was a significant jump from its earlier tally and confirmed that the party had established a durable presence in the state's political structure.

The contest between Mamata Banerjee and the BJP must be understood as more than an electoral rivalry. It represents a structural confrontation between two different models of political authority. Mamata Banerjee embodies the traditional strength of regional leadership in India, where local identity, cultural familiarity, and state-specific narratives play a central role. The BJP, on the other hand, represents a national model, driven by organisational uniformity, ideological clarity, and central leadership. This confrontation has reshaped voter behaviour. Sections of the electorate that were once aligned with the Left or with regional formations have shifted, either due to dissatisfaction with governance, aspiration for change, or alignment with a broader national narrative. The BJP has also successfully expanded its base among communities that were not previously part of its core support.

At the same time, the persistence of Mamata Banerjee's leadership highlights the continued relevance of regional politics. Her ability to retain power in 2021 demonstrated that regional leaders can still command strong loyalty when they effectively connect with local concerns and deliver targeted welfare measures. The current phase shows West Bengal has moved from a single-dominant-party system to a competitive bipolar contest. This change has implications that extend beyond the state.

India's federal structure has historically been shaped by the presence of strong regional parties. These parties have acted as counterweights to the central government, ensuring that political authority remains distributed. They have articulated local issues, influenced national coalitions, and contributed to a balance of power within the system. The gradual weakening of regional dominance in certain states raises questions about this balance. As national parties expand their footprint, the centre's influence increases. This does not necessarily undermine federal-

ism, but it changes its operational dynamics. The negotiation between state and centre becomes less about multiple competing voices and more about alignment within a broader national framework. The visual representation of political control across India, often depicted through maps showing states under direct rule or alliance governments, reinforces the perception of consolidation. However, such images capture only one dimension of political reality. Electoral success is shaped by a complex interplay of organisational strength, leadership, voter sentiment, and institutional processes.

It is also important to acknowledge that, over multiple election cycles, several opposition parties have raised concerns about aspects of the electoral process, including the functioning of electronic voting systems. These concerns have been part of political discourse in India and have been voiced by parties such as the Congress, Samajwadi Party, and others at different points in time. At the same time, India's electoral system continues to operate under constitutional institutions, with the Election Commission overseeing the conduct of elections and maintaining procedural frameworks.

For a general reader, it is essential to distinguish between political perception and institutional validation. Allegations and doubts form part of democratic contestation, but they co-exist with formal processes that govern electoral outcomes. This duality influences how results are interpreted by different segments of society. The rise of the BJP in West Bengal, therefore, should not be seen only as a story of electoral gain. It is a reflection of a broader shift in how political power is organised and contested in India. It demonstrates the capacity of a national party to enter and expand within regions that were once considered politically closed. At the same time, it underscores the resilience of regional leadership when it adapts and responds to changing conditions.

Looking ahead, the key question is not limited to which party wins future elections in West Bengal. The more significant issue is how the balance between regional autonomy and national consolidation will evolve. Will regional parties regain strength and reassert their role as counterweights, or will national parties continue to expand, leading to a more centralised political structure? West Bengal stands at the centre of this transition. Its political journey, from

The state's experience suggests that political power in India is no longer static, it is fluid, responsive, and influenced by both historical legacies and contemporary strategies. As voters reassess their choices and parties refine their approaches, the structure of political authority will continue to evolve. In that evolution lies the future of India's federal democracy.

It is perhaps in such moments that poetry captures what political language cannot fully express. As the poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz writes:

Daman mein musht-i-khakh-i-jigar, saghar mein hai hasrat-i-khooon-i-mey-Lo daman hum ne jhar diya, lo jam ul-tae dete hain.

B. S. Dara is an independent geopo-

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

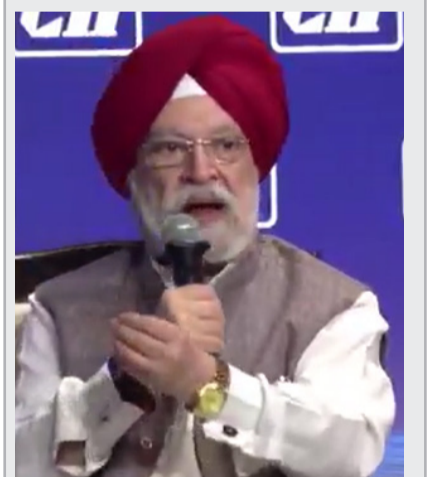
Those celebrating what they perceive to be a difficult situation for 1.4 billion Indians and the nation's energy sector should introspect.

While damaging their credibility, the panic, fear and rumour mongering they have consistently indulged in, will only take them this far and no further!

There is no crisis in India.

PM Sh Narendra Modi Ji has only advised the citizens to moderate energy consumption to prevent any fiscal strain on the economy, not because we had issues with energy supplies!

It was a word of caution and prudence. ~ Hardeep Singh Puri, India's Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas



ism, but it changes its operational dynamics. The negotiation between state and centre becomes less about multiple competing voices and more about alignment within a broader

Left dominance to regional assertion and now to competitive contestation with a national party, offers insight into the changing nature of Indian democracy.

litical commentator and analyst of Indian foreign policy and defence strategies. He writes on strategic affairs and global power dynamics.

# Gaurav Gogoi Urges New Assam Government to Prioritise Women's Safety Ahead of Swearing-In

GUWAHATI

Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi called on the incoming BJP-led government in Assam to prioritise public welfare and women's safety, while also urging the state police to function independently and focus on public security rather than political interests.

His remarks came ahead of the swearing-in ceremony of Chief Minister-designate Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is set to assume office for a third consecutive term under the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

Addressing reporters, Gogoi said the people of Assam had high expectations from the newly elected government following the BJP-led NDA's decisive victory in the



Assembly elections.

"In a democracy, the interests of the people matter the most. The government must fulfil the expectations and aspirations of the people of Assam," Gogoi said.

Highlighting concerns over women's safety in the state, the Congress leader said the issue continued to remain a serious challenge despite the BJP securing significant support from women voters.

"The women of Assam have voted for the BJP. But the security of women remains a critical issue in Assam," he said.

Gogoi also took aim at the functioning of the Assam Police, expressing hope that the force would concentrate on its law-and-order responsibilities rather than political

considerations.

"I hope Assam Police, instead of acting as agents of the BJP, will in future be strictly directed to focus on the security of women and public safety," he added.

The oath-taking ceremony of Sarma and his Council of Ministers will be held on May 12 at the Veterinary College Field in Khanapara, Guwahati. Several senior leaders of the NDA, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, are expected to attend the event.

Earlier in the day, Sarma said the first priority of the new government would be the implementation of promises made in the BJP's election manifesto. He said

the first Cabinet meeting would take place soon after the swearing-in ceremony.

"Implementing our manifesto will be our aim," Sarma told reporters.

The BJP-led NDA returned to power in Assam with a commanding majority in the 126-member Assembly, winning 102 seats. The BJP secured 82 seats, while its allies - Asom Gana Parishad and Bodoland People's Front - won 10 seats each.

The Congress-led opposition alliance managed to win 19 seats. Rajiv Dal and All India United Democratic Front secured two seats each, while the All India Trinamool Congress won one seat. The Assam Jatiya Parishad failed to open its account in the elections.

## Assam Rifles Dismantle 16 Bunkers, Arrest Five Militants in Manipur Operations

IMPHAL

Assam Rifles, in coordination with Manipur Police and other security agencies, has intensified intelligence-based counter-insurgency operations across Manipur, leading to the demolition of 16 bunkers and the arrest of five militants linked to banned insurgent groups, according to a defence statement issued on Monday.

The statement said the bunkers were dismantled during area domination and search operations conducted in the hill districts of Ukhrul and Kamjong. In a separate operation carried out on Sunday, security personnel arrested a self-styled Sergeant Major of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (Apubna) in Thoubal district. Officials said the militant was also functioning as a fighting commander of the outfit. The operation was jointly conducted by Kakching Commandos and Manipur Police.

Over the past week, security forces apprehended five militants associated with various valley-based insurgent groups, including Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup, Kangleipak Communist Party (PSC), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak, KYKL (SOREPA), and KCP (Apubna). Security forces also recovered a cache of arms and ammunition during the operations. The seized items included a sub-machine gun carbine, four bolt-action rifles, a 9mm pistol, a single-barrel 12-bore firearm, assorted ammunition, and a radio communication set.

In addition, officials recovered mobile phones, SIM cards, Aadhaar cards, camouflage uniforms, and cash amounting to Rs 6.81 lakh from the arrested militants.

According to the defence statement, all arrested individuals and seized materials have been handed over to the respective police stations for further legal proceedings and investigation.

## Funding Delays Stall Progress of Imphal Ring Road Project in Manipur

IMPHAL

The ambitious Imphal Ring Road project under Manipur's long-term urban development blueprint "Vision 2042" is facing delays amid pending payments of nearly Rs 200 crore to executing agencies, raising concerns over the pace of implementation. According to reports, the Public Works Department Manipur, which is implementing the project, has yet to clear substantial dues owed to agencies engaged in the construction work.

The total estimated cost of the project stands at Rs 1,760 crore. This includes Rs 734.71 crore earmarked for civil works and Rs 447.28 crore allocated for environmental mitigation measures. Additional provisions have been made for green transport systems, social safeguards and technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The project structure also requires a 10 per cent mobilisation advance to be released to the executing agencies. Officials said that out of the total project cost, approx-

imately Rs 1,383 crore is expected to be repaid over time. Under the funding arrangement, the Manipur government will bear around Rs 138 crore over a 25-year period, while the Government of India will cover the interest component. Backed by financial and technical support from the ADB, the Manipur government has set a target to complete the 51.23-kilometre Imphal Ring Road by December 2026. The project was formally launched in February 2025 and is expected to function as a major bypass corridor to ease persistent traffic congestion in Imphal city. The ring road project forms a key part of the state's broader urban planning strategy and is aimed at improving mobility, reducing travel time and enhancing overall quality of life in the capital region.

Authorities have stated that the project is expected to improve connectivity to markets, healthcare facilities and educational institutions while also generating employment opportunities and boosting economic activity.

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister-designate Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said the BJP-led government would begin work on implementing its election promises immediately after taking oath on May 12, indicating that the party's manifesto would form the foundation of the new administration's priorities.

Speaking to reporters ahead of the swearing-in ceremony in Guwahati, Sarma said the first Cabinet meeting of the new government would focus on commitments made during the Assembly election campaign.

"After taking the oath, we will hold the first Cabinet meeting. Implementing our manifesto will be our aim," Sarma said.

The oath-taking ceremony is scheduled to take place at 11:40 am on May 12 at the Veterinary College Field in Khanapara, Guwahati. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to arrive in the city to

## Himanta Biswa Sarma Says Manifesto Promises Will Drive New Assam Government's Agenda



attend the event.

According to Sarma, several senior BJP leaders, Union ministers, chief ministers from NDA-ruled states and party workers from across Assam are likely to be present at the ceremony. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and BJP president Nitin Nabin are also expected to attend.

Earlier in the day, Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya formally appointed Sarma as the Chief Minister under Article

164(1) of the Constitution after he staked claim to form the government.

The appointment order was issued by Chief Secretary Ravi Kota following Sarma's meeting with the Governor.

Sarma was unanimously elected leader of the BJP Legislature Party and the NDA Legislature Party during a meeting attended by legislators from the BJP and its alliance partners - Asom Gana Parishad and Bodoland People's Front.

Later, in a post on X, Sarma confirmed that the Governor had invited him to form the next government in Assam.

Addressing NDA legislators earlier, Sarma thanked Prime Minister Modi, Amit Shah and the BJP leadership for their continued support and said the government would maintain its focus on development and welfare programmes.

The BJP-led NDA returned to power in Assam with a sweeping mandate in the 126-member Assembly, winning 102 seats and securing a third consecutive term in office. The BJP won 82 seats, while alliance partners AGP and BPF secured 10 seats each.

The Congress-led opposition alliance won 19 seats. Rajiv Dal and All India United Democratic Front secured two seats each, while the All India Trinamool Congress won one seat. The Assam Jatiya Parishad failed to win any seat in the election.

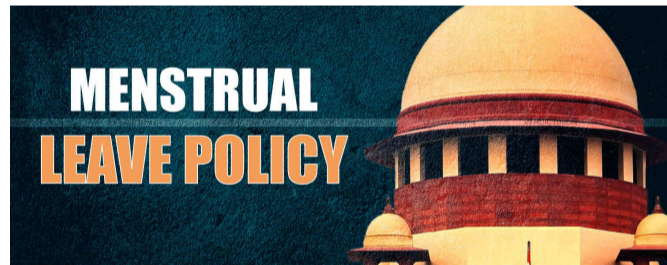
## Tripura Rights Panel Seeks Government Response on Menstrual Leave Policy

AGARTALA

The Tripura Human Rights Commission (THRC) has directed the Tripura government to clarify whether it is considering the introduction of menstrual leave or related welfare measures for women employees and female students in the state.

The commission, headed by Justice Arindam Lodh, took suo motu cognisance of the issue and sought details on any proposed policy, consultation, action plan or administrative discussion relating to menstrual leave, menstrual health support, attendance relaxation or workplace accommodation in government offices, private establishments and educational institutions.

In its order, the commission referred to recent observations made by the Supreme Court of India while hearing a writ petition on menstrual



leave. The apex court had observed that the issue involved "complex policy considerations" and should be addressed by the Union and state governments in consultation with stakeholders. It had also noted that states are free to formulate their own policies on the matter.

The commission pointed out that India currently does not have a central law mandating menstrual leave for women employees or female students. However, it noted

that several states have already implemented measures linked to menstrual welfare.

According to the THRC order, Bihar has been granting two days of menstrual leave every month to women government employees since 1992. Kerala has introduced menstrual leave and attendance relaxation for female students, while Karnataka approved a policy in 2025 providing one day of paid menstrual leave per month for women employees in both

public and private sectors.

The commission also referred to previous legislative efforts, including the Menstruation Benefits Bill, 2017 and the Right of Women to Menstrual Leave and Free Access to Menstrual Health Products Bill, 2022, both of which are yet to be enacted into law.

Describing menstrual health and dignity as an important component of women's human rights, the commission said the matter deserved "serious consideration" in light of constitutional guarantees relating to equality, dignity and humane working conditions.

The THRC has registered a suo motu case and directed Chief Secretary Jitendra Kumar Sinha to submit a detailed response within 30 days through the concerned departments.

The matter has been listed for further hearing on June 10, 2026.

## FIR Filed After Two Northeast Women Allegedly Assaulted and Molested in Delhi's Nehru Place

NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has registered an FIR after two young women from Assam and Nagaland were allegedly molested, assaulted and subjected to racial abuse by a group of men in South Delhi's Nehru Place area.

According to police officials, the incident occurred around 6:30 am on May 10 near a roadside tea stall outside a club in Nehru Place.

The women alleged that two men initially began catcalling them, following which several others joined in and the confrontation escalated into violence.

One of the victims claimed that her friend was slapped, surrounded and physically assaulted by multiple men. She further alleged that her clothes were torn during the attack.

The complainants also stated that racial slurs and abusive comments were directed at them during the incident. According to their allegations, one of the accused attacked them with a bamboo stick while they were trying to escape from the spot.

The women further alleged that the accused blocked their way, threatened them against speaking publicly about the incident and later continued intimidating them through so-

cial media platforms.

They also claimed that several bystanders recorded videos of the assault instead of intervening or offering assistance.

Police said a PCR call regarding the incident was received at Kalkaji Police Station soon after the altercation. A case has been registered under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita relating to molestation, assault, wrongful restraint, criminal intimidation and acts endangering life.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) Hemant Tiwari said the identities of the accused had been established and added that arrests were expected soon.

Social activist Ghrishri Bhuyan Narula, who assisted the victims, criticised the police response and alleged lapses in the handling of the case.

She claimed that the women were initially not provided with a copy of the FIR and had to be escorted home late at night due to safety concerns.

The incident has once again brought attention to concerns regarding the safety and security of people from Northeast India living in the national capital, particularly women, amid repeated allegations of racial discrimination and harassment.

## Tangkhul Naga Long Seeks Clarification From Manipur Home Minister Over Kamjong Attack Remarks

IMPHAL

The Working Committee of Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL) has strongly criticised Manipur Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam over his reported statement that there was "no foreign aggression" involved in the recent attacks in Kamjong district.

In a press communiqué issued on Sunday, the TNL Working Committee expressed concern over the minister's remarks made after his visit to Namlee, Wanglee and Choro villages in Kamjong district, which were affected by violence on May 7.

The organisation alleged that the statement was insensitive and claimed it undermined the suffering of Tangkhul Naga families whose houses and properties were allegedly destroyed during the attacks.

According to the TNL Working Committee, video evidence allegedly recorded by personnel of the Assam Rifles indicated that Choro village was attacked by cadres of the Kuki National Army-Burma (KNA-B). It further claimed that eyewitnesses stated the attackers had crossed over from across the Indo-Myanmar border.

The organisation also referred to a



suo motu FIR reportedly registered by Kamjong Police, which allegedly stated that around 50 to 60 armed militants suspected to be members of KNA-B entered from the Indo-Myanmar border and carried out attacks using sophisticated firearms, explosives and drones.

Questioning the Home Minister's remarks, the TNL Working Committee asked why foreign involvement was being denied despite what it described as "overwhelming evidence" already available. The committee also cited statements allegedly made by local MLA Leishiyho Keishing, who reportedly termed the attacks on Namlee, Wanglee and Choro villages as acts of "external aggression".

The organisation further raised concerns over the response time of Assam Rifles personnel during the incident, alleging that security forces failed to reach the affected villages promptly despite deployments in nearby areas.

In its statement, the TNL Working Committee also expressed concern over what it described as the "militarisation" of Naga border areas and accused both the state and central governments of failing to adequately protect Tangkhul Naga communities in the region.

The organisation demanded an immediate clarification from the Home Minister regarding his statement and warned that Tangkhul civil society organisations may be compelled to take further action if no clarification is issued.

The statement was released by the Media Cell of the Working Committee of the Tangkhul Naga Long.

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## SC asks Mamata to file fresh pleas regarding BJP's victory margin being less than SIR deletions in Assembly polls



NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court asked former West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and others to file fresh petitions regarding the victory margin for the BJP being less than the number of votes deleted during the SIR in several constituencies in the recently concluded Assembly elections.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi took note of the submissions after senior advocate and TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee alleged that in 31 seats, victory margins were less than the number of votes deleted.

Banerjee also referred to an earlier observation of Justice Bagchi that the court can look into the grievances if victory margins are less than the number of names deleted during the SIR.

At the outset, Kalyan Banerjee referred to the earlier observation of Justice Bagchi on victory margins and said, "One of my candidates lost by 862 votes and, interestingly, 5,550 votes were deleted during the SIR from that constituency."

He said there were 31 such

seats where victory margins were less than the deleted votes.

"Whatever you want to say about results, about deletions, etc., this requires an independent IA (interim application)," Justice Bagchi said.

The Election Commission, represented by senior advocate D S Naidu, opposed Banerjee's submission, saying that the remedy was an election petition.

Naidu said the poll panel can be held accountable for issues related to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls only and the consequential appeals against the addition or deletion of votes during the electoral rolls revision.

Justice Bagchi said that whatever the poll panel is saying -- that the election petition was the remedy -- it can come in the EC's reply in its counter-affidavit.

Banerjee then referred to the resignation of former Calcutta High Court Chief Justice TS Sivagnanam from the SIR Appellate Tribunal, which had been hearing appeals by persons excluded from the electoral roll in the

SIR exercise and cross appeals of the EC against alleged wrongful additions.

Justice Sivagnanam was one among 19 judges who had been designated as Appellate Tribunals by the Calcutta High Court to hear appeals against additions or deletions of persons from the voters' list.

Senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy, appearing for one of the petitioners, said that there is a feeling that appellate tribunals will now take four years to decide the appeals against deletions.

The CJ said he can see whether any improvement can be made in the adjudication of appeals against the deletions.

The apex court bench was hearing a batch of petitions, including one filed by Mamata Banerjee, related to the SIR of electoral rolls in the state.

Approximately 700 judicial officers from West Bengal and neighbouring Odisha and Jharkhand were deployed to deal with around 60 lakh claims and objections of those who were deleted from voter lists during the SIR of electoral rolls in the state.

Later, the Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court, at the direction of the top court, set up as many as 19 tribunals headed by former HC chief justices and judges to decide appeals against deletions of names of persons from the voter lists.

Justice Bagchi had earlier said the bench will examine the more valuable right to remain on the electoral rolls later.

## Amid fuel shortage concerns, MEA says India engaging with multiple countries to ensure uninterrupted energy supply



NEW DELHI

Amid concerns triggered by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to citizens to reduce fuel consumption and cut down gold purchases and foreign trips in view of the economic impacts of the West Asia conflict, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Monday said India is engaging with multiple countries to ensure uninterrupted energy supplies. Addressing an inter-ministerial briefing on recent developments in West Asia, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal asserted that all Indian seafarers in the region remain safe.

"Regarding energy security, we are working to ensure supply from multiple

countries. We are not dependent on a single source," he said.

He also reiterated India's position on the conflict, stating, "India has always been advocating for maintaining peace. India still says we should adopt diplomacy and discussion."

Jaiswal further said that a list of leaders scheduled to attend the BRICS Foreign Ministers' meeting in Delhi will be shared later.

"The BRICS Foreign Ministers' meeting will be held in New Delhi, and we expect representation from all member and partner countries. We will keep you updated on the specific leaders attending. From the beginning, India has been in favour of peace and has

welcomed any initiative taken toward that end. We maintain that the path of dialogue and diplomacy should be followed so that peace and stability can be restored in the Gulf region as soon as possible," he said.

Jaiswal also said that there is no plan to evacuate Indians from the UAE.

"Regarding reports about evacuating Indians from Fujairah port in the UAE, I request you to look at the MEA fact-check. We have already issued a clarification stating there is no basis in fact for such a story, and there is no plan to evacuate Indian nationals from Fujairah or the UAE," he said.

Opesh Kumar Sharma, Director of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and

Waterways, said that Indian flagged vessels have paid no taxes while passing the Strait of Hormuz.

According to Sharma, all Indian seafarers in the Gulf region are safe, and there has been no incident involving Indian-flagged merchant vessels or Indian crew members aboard foreign-flagged ships in the past three days.

He informed that nearly 10 Indian-flagged vessels and one foreign-flagged vessel carrying Indian cargo had safely reached India through the Strait of Hormuz. Sharma also clarified that India had not paid any taxes on these transits. He added that around 13 Indian-flagged ships remain in the region and that authorities are monitoring the welfare and requirements of crew members on a daily basis.

"Regarding the payment of taxes, as mentioned before, about ten Indian flag vessels and one foreign-flag vessel carrying Indian cargo have safely exited the Strait of Hormuz. None of them paid any tax. This movement was facilitated through close coordination with the MEA and our embassies. About 13 Indian flagships remain in the region, and all efforts are being made to get them out safely while ensuring the welfare of their crew," he said.

"The comments come as Iran has asked the US to end its pressure campaign against Tehran.

"Our demands are legitimate: an end to the war, the lifting of the blockade, a halt to acts of maritime piracy, and the release of Iranian assets unjustly frozen in banks under US pressure," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei said.

"Ensuring safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz and establishing security in the region and in Lebanon are among Iran's further demands, proposals that constitute a generous and legitimate framework for regional stability," he added.

## INTERNATIONAL

### No end to deadlock as Iran demands release of frozen assets as US rejects counteroffer



TEHRAN

Iran said it had demanded the release of its frozen assets and the end of a US blockade of its ports, after President Donald Trump angrily rejected Tehran's terms for ending the Middle East war.

The sharp exchange of messages raised the spectre of a return to open conflict in the Gulf, dashed hopes of a quick negotiated deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to commercial shipping and sent oil prices higher.

Trump reacted with fury after Iran responded to the latest US proposed outline for peace talks with a counteroffer he deemed, in a brief social media post, "TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE".

The impasse unnerved global energy markets, with international benchmark Brent crude prices rising 4.65 percent to \$99.95 a barrel during

early Monday trade in Asia.

The US leader did not say what had offended him in Iran's response, but Tehran's foreign ministry said it had called for an end to the US naval blockade and to the war "across the region" -- implying a halt to Israel's strikes targeting Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Crucially, ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei told reporters, Iran demanded the "release of assets belonging to the Iranian people, which have for years been unjustly trapped in foreign banks".

This would suggest not just a return to the status quo before the United States and Israel launched the war on February 28, but a victory for the Islamic government's long-standing campaign against economic isolation.

"We did not demand any concessions. The only thing we demanded

was Iran's legitimate rights," Baqaei said.

An end to international sanctions would also diminish Washington's leverage over Tehran as it tries to secure a lasting end to Iran's nuclear enrichment.

The US, Israel and their allies have long accused Iran of seeking an atomic bomb, an accusation Tehran has repeatedly denied.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted the conflict would not end until Iran's nuclear facilities are destroyed.

"It's not over, because there's still nuclear material -- enriched uranium -- that has to be taken out of Iran," he told US broadcaster CBS's 60 Minutes. "There's still enrichment sites that have to be dismantled," he said.

The Wall Street Journal, citing people familiar with the matter, said Iran's counter-proposal had included

the possibility of diluting some of its highly enriched uranium, with the rest transferred to a third country.

Iran had sought guarantees that the transferred uranium would be returned if negotiations failed or Washington abandoned the agreement, sources told the Journal.

Trump is expected to press China's President Xi Jinping -- a major buyer of Iranian oil -- on the Iran issue when he visits Beijing on Thursday, according to a senior US official.

The lack of a path to a resolution has focused concern on the Strait of Hormuz, where Iran is restricting maritime traffic and setting up a payment mechanism to charge tolls for crossing ships.

US officials have stressed it would be "unacceptable" for Tehran to control the international waterway -- the export route for a fifth of the world's oil.

The US Navy is also blockading Iran's ports, at times disabling or diverting ships heading to and from them.

As diplomatic momentum appeared to dwindle, fresh drone attacks in the Gulf on Sunday rattled the ceasefire.

The United Arab Emirates said its air defences intercepted a drone attack launched from Iran, while Kuwait reported "hostile drones" in its airspace.

Qatar's defence ministry also said a freighter arriving in its waters from Abu Dhabi was hit by a drone.

In a social media post on Sunday, the spokesman for the Iranian parliament's national security commission warned Washington: "Our restraint is over as of today."

"Any attack on our vessels will trigger a strong and decisive Iranian response against American ships and bases," Ebrahim Rezaei said.

### Tens of millions risk hunger as Hormuz standoff blocks fertiliser, UN official says



PARIS

Tens of millions of people could face hunger and starvation if fertilisers are not soon allowed through the Strait of Hormuz, the head of a UN task force aimed at averting a looming humanitarian crisis told on Monday.

Iran has had the strategic waterway -- through which a third of the world's fertilisers normally pass -- in a chokehold for months in retaliation for the war launched by the United States and Israel on February 28, disrupting a trade critical for farmers around the world in a race against the end of planting seasons.

"We have a few weeks ahead of us to prevent what will likely be a massive humanitarian crisis," Jorge Moreira da Silva, executive director of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and

leader of the task force, told in an interview in Paris.

"We may witness a crisis that will force 45 million more people into hunger and starvation."

The UN secretary general created the task force in March to spearhead a mechanism to allow fertilisers and related raw materials such as ammonia, sulphur and urea through the strait.

Cargo ships, including bulk carriers and general cargo vessels, sit at anchor offshore as a small motorboat passes in the foreground, in the Strait of Hormuz off Bandar Abbas, Iran, Monday, May 4, 2026.

For weeks, Moreira da Silva has been working to convince the belligerent parties to allow even a few ships through, and has met with "more than 100 countries" to rally UN member state support around the mechanism.

A growing number of countries are showing support for the plan, he said, but the United States and Iran, as well as Gulf countries -- who are key fertiliser producers, are not yet fully on board.

While the ultimate hope is for a "lasting peace" deal in the region and "freedom of navigation for all commodities" through the strait, "the problem is the planting season can't wait", Moreira da Silva said, with some ending in African nations within weeks.

Global focus has been on the economic impacts of the throttled oil and gas trade, but the United Nations has been sounding the alarm of the threat the blockade poses to the world's food security, with countries in Africa and Asia likely to be particularly hard hit.

Moreira da Silva said the United Nations could have the mechanism up and running in seven days but even if the strait were to reopen now, it would take three to four months to return to normality.

"It's just a matter of time. If we don't stop the origin of the crisis soon, we will have to deal with the consequences through humanitarian aid."

While food prices have not exploded yet, Moreira da Silva said, there has been a "massive increase" in fertiliser costs, which experts say would likely lead to a drop in agriculture productivity and send food prices soaring.

Moreira da Silva said moving just an average of five vessels a day of fertilisers and related raw materials through the strait would head off the crisis for farmers.

What's missing, he said, is "the political will".

"We can't procrastinate on what is possible to do, and what is urgent to do -- which is let the fertilisers cross the strait and, through that, minimize the risk of massive food insecurity at the global level."

## Himanta Biswa Sarma's Second Innings Begins Amid Rising Expectations for Assam's Future

**T**he return of Himanta Biswa Sarma as Chief Minister for a second consecutive term marks a significant moment in Assam's contemporary political history. More than a routine electoral victory for the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the renewed mandate signals the consolidation of a political model that has reshaped governance, electoral strategy and regional power equations across the Northeast over the past decade.

With NDA legislators unanimously electing Sarma as their leader, his swearing-in ceremony on May 12 has emerged as both a political spectacle and a symbolic assertion of the BJP's continued dominance in Assam. The event, attended by top national leaders and chief ministers from NDA-ruled states, underlines the growing strategic importance of Assam in the BJP's larger political roadmap for eastern and northeastern India.

For the BJP, Sarma's second term is not merely about continuity. It represents an attempt to deepen a governance narrative built around infrastructure expansion, welfare delivery, strong political messaging and administrative centralisation. For the opposition, however, it also raises difficult questions about the shrinking political space available to regional and national rivals in a state once known for fluid coalition politics and shifting electoral loyalties.

From Political Strategist to Regional Power Centre

Himanta Biswa Sarma's rise within Assam politics has been one of the most dramatic political transformations in the Northeast. Once regarded as a key Congress strategist and one of the closest associates of former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, Sarma's departure from the Congress and entry into the BJP fundamentally altered the political landscape of Assam.

Since joining the BJP in 2015, Sarma has played a central role in expanding the party's organisational and electoral footprint not only in Assam but across the Northeast. His political approach combined aggressive campaigning, coalition-building with regional parties, and a governance-driven narrative aimed at both urban voters and rural communities.

Under his leadership, Assam witnessed a shift from fragmented coalition politics to a more consolidated political structure dominated by the BJP-led alliance. The NDA's successive victories in the state Assembly elections have reinforced Sarma's position as one of the BJP's most influential regional leaders outside Hindi-speaking states.

His political influence extends beyond Assam. As convener of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), Sarma has been instrumental in helping the BJP establish or strengthen governments in several northeastern states. This has elevated him from being a state-level politician to a major regional power centre within the party.

Governance as Political Capital  
One of the defining features of Sarma's first tenure was the manner in which governance itself became a political tool. Unlike traditional political campaigns built primarily on ideology or identity, the BJP under Sarma sought to combine development projects with strong political messaging.

Large-scale road construction, expansion of medical colleges, improvements in healthcare infrastructure, educational reforms and urban development projects became central to the government's public image. Several infrastructure initiatives, including highways, bridges and connectivity projects, were promoted as symbols of a "new Assam" moving toward economic modernisation.

The government also focused heavily on welfare schemes aimed at women, students, tea garden workers and economically weaker communities. Financial assistance programmes, educational support schemes and social welfare initiatives helped the BJP penetrate voter groups that were once considered outside its traditional support base.

Supporters of the Chief Minister often describe him as a decisive administrator capable of taking quick decisions during crises. This image was strengthened during

natural disasters, pandemic management and law-and-order situations where the government projected itself as highly responsive and



centralised in decision-making.

At the same time, Sarma's administration placed strong emphasis on visible governance. Frequent inspections, direct public outreach, active use of social media and highly publicised announcements became integral to the government's communication strategy.

Identity Politics and Electoral Consolidation

While development and governance formed one pillar of Sarma's political strategy, identity politics remained another major factor behind the BJP's electoral success in Assam.

Issues such as illegal immigration, land rights, demographic change and protection of indigenous communities were repeatedly highlighted during the BJP's campaigns and governance discourse. These themes resonated strongly with sections of Assamese society concerned about cultural and political identity.

The BJP successfully positioned itself as a defender of indigenous interests while simultaneously expanding its social coalition among tribal communities, tea tribes, Bengali Hindus and sections of minority populations.

This balancing act helped the party widen its electoral base across both Upper and Lower Assam. In many rural regions, the combination of welfare schemes and identity-focused politics proved electorally effective.

Sarma's political messaging also reflected a broader national BJP strategy that combines welfare governance with strong cultural and nationalist narratives. In Assam, however, these themes were adapted to local historical anxieties surrounding migration, language and ethnicity.

Critics argue that such politics risks deepening social divisions in an already diverse and sensitive state. Supporters, however, maintain that the government's policies have strengthened indigenous confidence and political stability.

The Challenges Before the Second Term

Despite the NDA's emphatic electoral victory, the second term is expected to be more challenging than the first. Expectations among the public have risen significantly, and the government now faces pressure to move beyond infrastructure expansion toward long-term economic transformation.

Employment generation remains one of the biggest concerns in Assam, particularly among educated youth. While government recruitment drives and welfare schemes have provided some relief, large sections of young people continue to seek stable employment opportunities.

The demand for industrial growth, private investment and entrepreneurship development is likely to become more prominent in the coming years. Many analysts believe the second term will be judged less by political rhetoric and more by the government's ability to generate sustainable economic opportunities.

Flood management remains another major challenge. Assam continues to face recurring floods and erosion that affect lakhs of people annually. While embankment strengthening and disaster response mechanisms have improved in some areas, long-term solutions remain elusive.

Environmental concerns are also becoming increasingly significant. Human-elephant conflict, deforestation, ecological degradation and climate-related vulnerabilities continue to affect multiple districts across the state.

Balancing development with environmental sustainability will be a major test for the government, particularly as large-scale infrastructure projects expand into ecologically sensitive regions.

Managing Social Harmony in a Diverse State

Assam's complex social composition means governance cannot rely solely on electoral majorities. The state remains home to multiple ethnic, linguistic and religious communities with distinct political aspirations and historical grievances.

Critics of the BJP government argue that alongside development, the administration must place greater emphasis on inclusive governance and social harmony. They caution that excessive political polarisation could undermine long-term stability in the state.

The handling of ethnic tensions, land disputes and community relations will therefore remain politically sensitive issues during the second term.

At the same time, the government faces the challenge of managing aspirations among indigenous communities seeking greater autonomy and constitutional protections. Regional identity politics, which has historically shaped Assam's political discourse, is unlikely to disappear despite the BJP's dominance.

For Sarma, maintaining political stability while balancing competing social interests may prove to be one of the most difficult aspects of governance in the years ahead.

Assam's Growing Strategic Importance

Sarma's second term also carries significance beyond Assam. The state has increasingly become the political and administrative gateway to the Northeast, and the BJP views the region as strategically important both electorally and geopolitically.

Assam's connectivity projects, trade routes and infrastructure expansion are closely linked to India's Act East Policy and regional economic ambitions. The state's political stability is therefore viewed as important not only for regional governance but also for national strategic planning.

Within the BJP, Sarma is now regarded as one of the party's most influential regional leaders capable of delivering electoral results while maintaining organisational cohesion.

His leadership style - marked by administrative assertiveness, political agility and strong communication - has become central to the BJP's model of governance in the Northeast.

A Crucial Political Test Ahead

As Himanta Biswa Sarma begins his second consecutive term as Chief Minister, Assam enters another critical political phase. The NDA's decisive victory has given the government both political authority and public expectations on an unprecedented scale.

The coming years will determine whether the second term becomes simply an extension of political dominance or evolves into a transformative period marked by economic growth, institutional stability and social balance.

The government's ability to address unemployment, environmental vulnerabilities, ethnic sensitivities and development aspirations will shape not only Sarma's political legacy but also the future trajectory of Assam.

For now, the BJP-led alliance stands firmly in control of Assam's political landscape. But with greater power comes greater scrutiny. The second innings of Himanta Biswa Sarma may ultimately be remembered not for electoral victories alone, but for how effectively his government responds to the changing aspirations of a rapidly evolving state.

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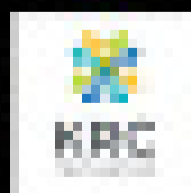


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