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**Kaziranga Sees Record Tourist Footfall in 2025-26, Nearly 4.7 Lakh Visitors Mark All-Time High**

**GUWAHATI**  
Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve has recorded its highest-ever annual tourist footfall in 2025-26, with 4,68,147 visitors, reflecting a sustained surge in both domestic and international interest in the UNESCO World Heritage site.

According to official figures, the latest numbers mark a significant increase from 4,06,564 visitors in 2024-25 and 3,27,493 in 2023-24, underscoring a steady upward trajectory in tourism over recent years.

Of the total visitors in 2025-26, 4,37,673 were Indian nationals, while 30,474 were foreign tourists, accounting for approximately 4.5 per cent of the total footfall. The rise is particularly notable when compared to a decade ago, when the park attracted just over 1.55 lakh visitors in 2016-17.

The momentum has continued into the current season as well, with April 2026 alone witnessing 49,322 visitors, including 2,116 foreign nationals.

Kaziranga's growing global profile has been bolstered by a series of high-profile visits in recent years. Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck toured the park, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a landmark visit on March 9, 2024-the first by a sitting Prime Minister since the park was declared a national park in 1974.

Union External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also visited the site alongside Heads of Mission from multiple countries during the Advantage Assam 2.0 initiative in February 2025. Other prominent visitors included Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, and French Ambassador Thierry Mathou.

Officials attribute the surge in tourism to improved infrastructure, enhanced global outreach, and the introduction of new visitor experiences across multiple divisions of the park, including Bokakhat, Biswanath Chariali, and Nagaon.

**WHO SAID WHAT**

**Teekha jyada to nai hua ?**  
~ Temjen Imna  
Along, Tourism & Higher Education Minister of Nagaland



**Storytelling, memes, and Gen Z tactics: BJP's digital strategy behind Himanta Biswa Sarma's historic win in Assam**



**GUWAHATI**

Bharatiya Janata Party's digital strategy played a decisive role behind NDA's thumping victory in Assam, securing more than 100 seats to confirm Himanta Biswa Sarma's second term as Chief Minister and the party's third successive term.

BJP's digital team fundamentally reshaped the narrative in Assam by dominating the digital landscape with high-impact, strategic content.

Through a mix of storytelling, memes, and Gen Z-focused imagery, the digital team successfully projected Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma - widely known as "Mama" - as the definitive protector of indigenous culture and the driving force behind a modern, developing state. This digital offensive effectively branded the Congress party as a "curse" to Assam, highlighting their support for illegal immigrants.

Recent digital engagement has shown the success of the BJP's strategy in Assam, with public sentiment strongly supporting Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his leadership. Sarma, now widely seen as a tireless guardian of As-

samese identity, has become more than just a politician, with his "never-give-up" attitude positioning him as crucial to the state's survival. The digital campaign has effectively neutralized the opposition, particularly Congress, by linking them to "toxic" interests, which sparked widespread anger and a call to remove the party to protect Assamese culture.

Voters now firmly believe that under Sarma's leadership, Assam's cultural heritage is secure from external threats. The overwhelming positive response in the digital space further highlights the trust and development the electorate associates with his administration, viewing it as the only force genuinely dedicated to the land and its indigenous people.

Assam Elections 2026 has dealt the Congress with a double blow. The grand old party has not only lost the state for a third consecutive time but managed to elect just one Hindu MLA out of its total tally of 19. Behind Congress's near-complete eradication from Hindu areas are three factors. Firstly, the unabashed and assertive Hindu identity politics of the BJP and in particular of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Second - this ag-

gressive Hindutva politics exacerbated already deep-seated resentment among Assam's Hindu voters towards Bengali Muslims or Miya, due to historical and legacy reasons. Third and not the least - a long drawn meticulously digital campaign by the BJP which amplified the above two factors and created a powerful narrative labelling the Congress as a "Miya Party"

BJP secured a resounding victory in the Assam Assembly elections, winning 82 out of 126 seats, marking its third consecutive term in the state. The BJP created history in the assembly polls results, with the party slated to form its first government in West Bengal and the party-led NDA scoring a hat-trick of victories in Assam.

Meanwhile, the BJP and its allies secured 102 votes against 75 of 2021, with the BJP securing 82 votes with 18 new seats added to its 2021 and 2024 by-election resultant seats. AGP secured 10 seats, BOPF secured 10 seats, taking NDA's total to 102.

Congress secured 19 seats, Rajiv Dal secured only 2 seats, while BJP failed to secure even a single seat. Meanwhile, AI-UDF managed to get 2 seats.

**Himanta Biswa Sarma tenders resignation to Governor after BJP's third straight win in Assam**

**GUWAHATI**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday handed over his formal resignation to Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya following a decisive victory in the Assam poll.

The move marks the end of the current assembly's term, clearing the path for the formation of the third consecutive BJP government in the state.

Speaking to the media outside the Lok Bhavan, Sarma said that the Governor has requested him to take care of the state till the formation of a new government.

"The ECI has officially announced the assembly election result, and the ECI has submitted the notification of the result to the Governor of Assam. I submitted my resignation letter as the Chief Minister of Assam to the Governor and simultaneously, I requested him to dissolve the current Assam



assembly. The Governor of Assam has accepted my resignation letter and suggestion of dissolving the current Assam assembly, and he directed me to continue as the caretaker till the formation of a new government. I think that the new government will be formed soon. During this time, we will work as a caretaker government," Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

On Tuesday, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma thanked the people of the state for delivering a decisive mandate to the BJP-led NDA, asserting that the result reflects public confidence in Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the government's development agenda.

Speaking to ANI here, Sarma said, "I thank the people of Assam. We are very grateful for the confidence you have shown in the Prime Minister. To ensure that the Ganga of development continues to flow in Assam, the Government of

India and the Government of Assam will work as a double government."

The remarks come after the BJP secured a resounding victory in the Assam Assembly elections, winning 82 out of 126 seats, marking its third consecutive term in the state. The BJP created history in the assembly polls results, with the party slated to form its first government in West Bengal and the party-led NDA scoring a hat-trick of victories in Assam.

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While the opposition Mitra-joot of INC secured 19 seats, Rajiv Dal secured only 2 seats, while BJP failed to secure even a single seat. Meanwhile, AI-UDF managed to get 2 seats.

**NIA Chief Rakesh Aggarwal Meets Manipur Governor at Lok Bhavan**



**IMPHAL**

Rakesh Aggarwal, Director General of the National Investigation Agency, called on the Governor of Manipur, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, during his visit to the state.

The meeting was held at Lok Bhavan in Imphal, where the NIA chief was accompanied by senior officers of the agency. The visit comes amid ongoing efforts to strengthen coordination between central investigative agencies and the state administration.

While official details of the discussion were not disclosed, such meetings typically focus on matters related to internal security, law enforcement coordination, and the progress of ongoing investigations handled by the NIA in the region.

Manipur has been under close se-

curity watch in recent years due to law and order challenges, making coordination between central and state agencies crucial. The presence of the NIA Director General highlights the importance of continued engagement in addressing security concerns and ensuring effective investigation of cases with national implications.

The Governor appreciated the role of central agencies in supporting the state's efforts to maintain peace and stability. The visit is seen as part of ongoing institutional collaboration aimed at strengthening security mechanisms and ensuring timely action on sensitive cases.

Senior officials from the NIA who accompanied Aggarwal also interacted with state authorities as part of the visit, reinforcing coordination at multiple levels.

**SBI releases first 1 crore payout to kin of slain constable under Police Salary Package**

**IMPHAL**

In a first under the Police Salary Package scheme, the Manipur Home Department has facilitated a financial assistance of ₹1 crore to the family of late Constable Soibam Sanjit Singh, who was killed in the line of duty in July 2025 at Sagoltonga in Imphal West district.

The compensation was extended under a scheme implemented through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Manipur Police and State Bank of India in October 2024.

Officials said the cheque was handed over to the constable's wife in the presence of their son at the office of the Superintendent of Police, Imphal West, on Tuesday.

Senior officials, including Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) L. Kallun, attended the event. The cheque was presented by Kh. Okendra Singh on behalf of the bank.

The Police Salary Package provides a range of benefits to personnel, including personal accident insurance coverage of up to ₹1 crore and ₹10 lakh term life insurance in cases of non-accidental death, along with integrated banking services.

The Manipur Police acknowledged the support extended by SBI and reiterated its commitment to the welfare of its personnel and their families, highlighting the risks and sacrifices associated with duty in the state.

**Havildar shot in anti-drug operation along Assam-Manipur border; massive manhunt launched**



**SILCHAR**

An anti-drug operation along the Assam-Manipur border turned violent late Tuesday night after suspected traffickers opened fire on a police team, critically injuring a Cachar Police havildar in the Joypur-Jirighat border region," Saikia said.

Officials stated that the suspected traffickers fled into dense forest areas under the cover of darkness following the gunfight. No arrests have been made so far, and an investigation is underway to identify those involved.

Following the incident, additional security forces, including personnel from the Assam Rifles, have been deployed, and a large-scale search operation has been launched across the forested border terrain.

The Assam-Manipur border, particularly stretches within Cachar, continues to pose operational challenges for security agencies due to its use by organised drug trafficking networks.



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## BENGAL IS SALVAGED

"We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it, tyranny is a habit, it has its own organic life, it develops finally into a disease, blood and power intoxicate, return of the human dignity, repentance and regeneration become impossible."

Most of the countrymen must be celebrating the power of ballot, especially in much sensitive West Bengal where the saffron surge—the saffron wave—has swept away Trinamool Congress by 203 to 84. Majority of Bengalis must, therefore, be heaving a sigh of relief over seeing a dispensation clung to the seat of power for the last 15 years, thriving on extreme levels of appeasement of vote bank even at the cost of the genuine rights of the majority community coupled with threats, intimidation, and coercion of the genuine dissent and opposition—on-upmanship, allegations of corruption and mismanagement and the like, having been thrown out by the matured but frightened, fatigued, wearisome and desperate Bengalis. Unprecedented, the levels of anger, the resolution to bring in the change, the determination to brave threats and reprisals, the voter turnout this time has been historic as it has broken all time records—a massive 93%—more than 11% as compared to 2021 Assembly elections wherein BJP had secured a vote percentage of 38.15 against a decisive 48.02 of the TMC. In other words, the gap of 9.87% has not only been achieved this time but surpassed by 1.13%. It is worth noting, again, that on May 2, the re-polling in one of the troubled places—Falta in 24 Parganas District, Hindu voters especially the women, were allegedly openly threatened of dire consequences if they dared to cast their vote resulting in massive protests by the aggrieved voters who were assured of security by the central forces. Again, taking into view several electoral offences, the polling in large number of 265 polling stations of Falta including auxiliary polling stations, fresh polling is now ordered by the ECI on May 21, 2026 between 7 am to 6 pm and the counting scheduled to take place on May 24, 2026. So, the constitutional authority—the ECI—ensured only free, fair, transparent and fearless process of polling in the state irrespective of the wishful thinking of some people treating their particular areas as their fiefdoms, or the arrogance of "pitting" Pushpa against the "Singham" referring to deputing an IPS officer Ajay Pal Sharma to help in containing the element of ruffianism during polling. This event is symbolic of how the elections were treated by the Party in power—assembly, parliamentary or the Panchayat—where large scale violence was treated as one of the inseparable constituents. This time, no incident of major violence, particularly no death took place—a great achievement of the ECI. This time, twin "SS" factors played a considerable part in largely conducting transparent polling. One is Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and the other is Security Forces in the absence of which the much aspired for Poriborton or a change would have not been as spectacular and unprecedented. Add to it and admit it without reservation, that Hindu awakening, even if belated, played an unprecedented part.

The citadel of the Trinamool Congress, therefore, has finally got demolished the same way its predecessor, the Left Front was defeated by the Trinamool wave spearheaded by Mamta Banerjee. When she, on May 20, 2011 registered a historic win and became the CM, this writer, through these very columns, had attributed the splendid victory to hard work, simplicity, honesty, and a spirit of service by Mamta Banerjee, clad in a simple cotton saree and wearing a Hawaii chappal. Hopes were high and great expectations from her as she raised three slogans—"Joy Bangla", "Ma, Matti, Manush" and "Khela Hobo". The slogan of "Ma, Matti and Manush" was expected to fructify into regaining of the great Bengali culture, traditions, values and correcting historical wrongs and its manipulated recordings besides correcting economic and social inequalities and making Bengal an industrial and manufacturing hub again. With the passage of time, the TMC rule proved no better than the Left Front rule, in fact, it turned out to be the worst. Each day witnessed an accelerated spree of Muslim appeasement to an extent of having soft corner for hundreds of thousands of illegal Bangladesh immigrants and later Myanmar Muslim immigrants too. Mamta Ji never spoke a word against atrocities and persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh and now the "treasons" of the defeat of the TMC are reported to have been felt there too.

The CAA and NRC were openly declared never to be implemented in West Bengal by Mamta Banerjee calling the process as a "trap" and promoting discrimination. Keeping NRC in deep freezer for all times, unprecedented levels of demographic invasions and creating imbalances by ensuring those illegal entrants in hundreds of thousands did not leave West Bengal and instead remained a fortified vote bank coupled with facilitating unbridled influx of illegal immigrants, was the aim.

The extent of going that far, for the appeasement and vote Bank interests, Budget for Madrasa education for 2026-27 was Rs. 5714 crore which includes welfare scholarships and related infrastructure. It is worth noting that the Budgetary allocation of this whopping extent in West Bengal is higher than the Union government's national allocation for minority affairs. No concern appears to be there for any fiscal priorities and balance but all for vote bank appeasement, trying to breaking all records. Noteworthy, on the other hand, is that for Science and Research it was just a paltry of Rs.82 crore only, for Information Technology Rs. 217 crore and Industries and Commerce Rs.1400 crore only.

The BJP having won more than double the seats as much of the TMC and at the cost of repetition, Bengali people especially the majority community, are now feeling having got emancipated. If we deduct the element of fear, coercion and intimidation which this time was absolutely nominal, thanks to the most efficient and transparent conducting of elections by the ECI, as compared to horribly massive in 2021 elections, more seats would have been in the kitty of the BJP.

Looking to which levels the state of West Bengal was plummeted into as regards various sensitive and important variables, it will not be an overstatement to admit that the BJP did not need West Bengal in as much as West Bengal urgently and desperately needed the BJP. It was a situation akin to SoS.

While all accolades and laurels are due to the ECI which, after conducting the most crucial and important exercise of SIR, ensured that people exercised their right to franchise without fear, reprisals, intimidation and physical violence, caused considerable number of security personnel to be deployed to ensure free and fair polling. At the same time, the resolute determination of the people to bring in "Poriborton" or a change of government and the "risk" to come out of homes to cast votes was firmly taken by them.

Matra Shakti—the power of Bhartiya Nari—was not only vivid but superbly united and organised during the course of campaigning by the candidates especially witnessed in public meetings addressed by the PM, HM, CMs of UP and Assam and others. Why not, incidents of Sandeshk-hali, Murshidabad, Malda, North 24 Parganas, Howrah, Burdwan, Nadia etc. had shaken their confidence in a government that was found wanting in providing succour, fair treatment and justice.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

Talent is a gift, but character is a choice. -

John C. Maxwell

# DID INDIA LEAVE SPACE FOR PAKISTAN IN GLOBAL DIPLOMACY?



B S DAR

The second term of United States President Donald Trump marked a shift in how Washington approached its external engagements. The emphasis moved away from continuity in alliances towards immediate outcomes. Partnerships were assessed less on their long-term strategic value and more on their ability to deliver results in specific situations. This approach became visible during the 2026 Iran war and the disruption of the Strait of Hormuz, which affected global oil flows, raised energy prices, and created pressure across Gulf economies. In this environment, the United States adjusted its diplomatic approach in West Asia and, in doing so, reduced India's role while engaging Pakistan for limited but operationally useful purposes.

This development arose from the demands of the moment. The conflict required communication between hostile actors, particularly between Washington and Tehran. Direct engagement remained constrained. As a result, countries that could maintain working relations with both sides gained relevance. Pakistan positioned itself within this space. It offered to host discussions, facilitated communication, and maintained contact with multiple stakeholders in the region. Its leadership engaged with Gulf capitals while continuing its security commitments in countries such as Saudi Arabia. This combination of diplomatic access and security presence increased its immediate utility.

India, by contrast, was not positioned to perform this function. In the period preceding the conflict, India had strengthened its strategic alignment with the United States and Israel. This alignment delivered tangible gains in defence cooperation, intelligence exchange, and technology partnerships. However, it also influenced how India was perceived in a region marked by deep political divisions. At the same time, India's engagement with Iran had declined over the years due to sanctions pressures, reduced energy dependence, and shifting policy priorities. When the crisis unfolded, India lacked the operational channels required to engage all sides simultaneously. As a result, it was not considered a mediator in the evolving diplomatic process.

To understand the significance of this moment, it is necessary to place it within the longer history of India-United States-Pakistan relations. During the Cold War, the United States maintained close military and strategic ties with Pakistan, which joined alliances such as SEATO and CENTO. India, under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, pursued a policy of non-alignment and maintained distance from bloc politics. This divergence shaped early perceptions in Washington, where Pakistan was viewed as a more immediate security partner. The 1971 Bangladesh war marked a low point in India-United States relations, with Washington extending support to Pakistan, while India moved closer to the Soviet Union through the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation.

The post-Cold War period gradually altered this equation. Economic liberalisation in India during the 1990s created new avenues for engagement. The nuclear tests of 1998 initially led to sanctions but were followed by sustained dialogue. A significant turning point came with the 2005 India-United States Civil Nuclear Agreement,

which marked a strategic opening and signalled Washington's recognition of India as a rising power. Over the following decade, defence cooperation expanded, joint military exercises increased, and India's role in the Indo-Pacific gained importance in the context of balancing China's rise. Pakistan, meanwhile, remained relevant to the United States primarily in the context of Afghanistan, especially after 2001, when it became a key logistical partner in the war on terror.

However, the United States has historically demonstrated a pattern of engaging Pakistan when immediate operational needs arise. This was evident during the Afghan conflict, and it reappeared during the Iran crisis. The pattern suggests that Washington's engagement with Pakistan is not driven by long-term trust, but by situational necessity. The Trump administration's second term reinforced this approach by placing greater emphasis on short-term outcomes. Even established partners were not guaranteed a central role unless they were directly relevant to the crisis at hand.

The events of 2026 therefore exposed certain limitations in India's foreign policy posture, particularly in West Asia. India's long-standing approach in the region was based on maintaining balanced relations with competing actors. It engaged Iran for energy and connectivity, developed ties with Israel for defence and technology, and built strong economic relationships with Gulf countries, supported by a large Indian diaspora. This balance allowed India to avoid entanglement in regional rivalries while preserving access to multiple partners. Over time, however, this equilibrium narrowed. Greater alignment with the United States and Israel coincided with reduced engagement with Iran, which limited India's flexibility during a period of crisis.

India remained an important economic and strategic actor, but it was not present in the specific diplomatic channels that became critical during the conflict. Its strong economic links with the Gulf did not translate into a role in security or mediation frameworks. Pakistan, in contrast, retained a limited but functional presence in these areas, particularly through defence cooperation with Gulf states. This difference in positioning, rather than any broader shift in power, explains the variation in roles during the crisis.

It is also important to recognise that India's partnership with the United States has produced significant long-term benefits. Defence cooperation has improved access to advanced military systems and enhanced interoperability. Strategic coordination in the Indo-Pacific has strengthened India's position in relation to China. Technology partnerships have expanded across sectors such as semiconductors and digital infrastructure. Trade and investment flows have increased, contributing to economic growth. These gains remain central to India's global strategy and are not diminished by short-term diplomatic developments in another region.

At the same time, the crisis demonstrated that alignment alone does not ensure influence across all theatres. The United States operates within a hierarchy of priorities, and regions experiencing immediate instability can temporarily take precedence. In such situations, Washington engages actors based on their immediate utility. India's absence from crisis diploma-

cy in West Asia did not indicate a breakdown in its relationship with the United States. It reflected the limits of that relationship in a specific context. Pakistan's role, while visible, should also be assessed with caution. Its economic challenges remain significant, and its reliance on external financial support continues. Its industrial base is limited, and its political environment is marked by instability. Its engagement during the crisis improved its diplomatic visibility, but it did not alter its structural position in the international system. Its relevance was tied to the specific requirements of the moment.

Nevertheless, even temporary shifts can carry implications. Diplomatic visibility influences perception, and perception can affect access, investment, and political engagement. If one actor is consistently present in key negotiations while another is absent, the balance of influence can gradually change. For India, the concern is the possibility of reduced participation in future decision-making processes. India's diplomatic tradition has historically been defined by the ability to maintain engagement across competing power centres while preserving autonomy. From non-alignment under Nehru to calibrated alignment under Indira Gandhi, and later strategic opening under Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh, Indian diplomacy has demonstrated an ability to operate across divides without losing balance. The present moment does not call for a departure from this tradition, but for its restoration in operational terms.

The lessons from this episode are practical. India needs to expand its operational reach. This includes rebuilding engagement with Iran where feasible, maintaining communication channels with all major actors in West Asia, and increasing its involvement in regional security discussions. It also requires the ability to respond more quickly during crises and to position itself as a participant in diplomatic processes rather than as an observer.

The events of 2026 illustrated the importance of relevance in specific situations. Pakistan's role was a function

of access and timing. India's absence was a result of limited flexibility in that moment. The distinction is important.

It suggests that the issue is not one of capability, but of positioning. In international politics, long-term strength must be complemented by the ability to act in real time. Strategic partnerships provide stability, but influence is often determined by presence during moments of crisis. India possesses the scale, capacity, and part-

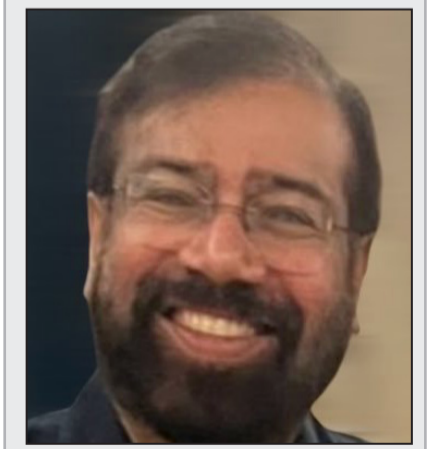
### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**Bengal's business community is absolutely delighted with result of Bengal elections:**

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**A decisive mandate for BJP is the catalyst Bengal's economy has been waiting for.**

**~ Harsh Goenka, Chairman, RPG Enterprises**



nerships required to influence global



of access and timing. India's absence was a result of limited flexibility in that moment. The distinction is important.

outcomes. To do so consistently, India must ensure that it is present wherever decisions are being made.

# Gaurav Gogoi takes “full moral responsibility” for Congress’ defeat in Assam

GUWAHATI

Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi on Tuesday said that he takes the full responsibility for Congress’ defeat in the state assembly elections.

While addressing a press conference here, Gogoi said that Congress accepts the people’s mandate while expressing gratitude to the grassroots workers for their efforts during the Assembly elections.

“As the state Congress president, I take full moral responsibility. I also thank our political workers (who) gave their full potential,” the Assam Congress chief said.

“We accept the people’s mandate. We express our gratitude to those who voted for us and support us. Congress will reach out to those who did not vote



for us. We express our gratitude to the grassroots Congress workers who stand with us despite facing problems. We have seen a new Congress,” he added.

He also expressed gratitude to Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Leader of Opposition (LoP) Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, and other party leaders.

“I express my gratitude to Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Jitendra Singh and other Congress leaders. We weren’t able to get the seats which we expected. But we will try our suggestions for the development of Assam in and outside of the assembly. We will always stand with the general people of Assam,” Gogoi remarked.

He noted that the results in several places are questionable, further noting

that a meeting of newly elected Congress MLAs is expected to be held on May 9. “People have not accepted this result. We thought that the fight would be neck to neck. But the result in many seats is thinkable. On Saturday (May 9), we will call every newly elected MLA (of the party),” he said.

Gogoi’s remarks come after he lost the Jorhat Assembly constituency to BJP’s Hitendra Nath Goswami in the state assembly election. Goswami defeated Gogoi with a margin of 23,182 votes.

The BJP secured a resounding victory in the Assam Assembly elections, winning 82 out of 126 seats, marking its third consecutive term in the state. Allies Bodoland People’s Front and Asom Gana Parishad secured 10 seats each, while Congress managed 15 seats.

## Tripura BJP Councillor Found Dead After Dharmanagar Win; Protests Erupt, Probe Launched

AGARTALA

A day after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured a decisive victory in Dharmanagar, a party councillor and local youth wing leader, Rahul Kishore Roy, was found dead at his residence in North Tripura district in an apparent case of suicide, triggering protests and a police investigation.

Roy’s body was recovered on Tuesday morning from his home in the Dharmanagar area, under North Tripura district. Soon after the news spread, BJP supporters staged protests, blocking roads in the Chandrapur locality and demanding immediate action against those allegedly responsible. The demonstrations led to significant traffic disruptions in the area.

Family members have alleged that Roy had been under severe mental stress due to repeated threats and harassment by unidentified individuals. According to them, a group of persons had allegedly visited his residence multiple times, intimidating him late at night.

Roy’s wife, Ananya Bhatnagar, lodged a police complaint naming seven individuals—Kankan Choudhury, Hirakjyoti Nath, Manoj Purkayastha, Niladri Bhattacharjee, Abhijit Das, Suraj Deb, and Prabal Deb—along with others. The complaint alleges trespassing, assault on family members, and repeated death threats.

She stated that the continued intimidation left her husband deeply distressed, and that she discovered him hanging in the bathroom on Tuesday morning.

Roy was considered a close associate of former MLA Biswabandhu Sen, whose death had necessitated the recent Dharmanagar by-election.

Police have initiated an investigation into the incident, including the allegations made by the family. Authorities are yet to confirm the exact circumstances surrounding the death.

## Four Myanmar Nationals Arrested with Suspected Heroin in Manipur’s Churachandpur; Probe Underway

IMPHAL

Security forces have arrested four Myanmar nationals for their alleged involvement in drug trafficking in Manipur’s Churachandpur district, police said on Tuesday.

Acting on specific intelligence inputs, a joint team launched operations in the Behiang Police Station area, intercepting a motorcycle and apprehending two individuals from Bualkot village. During the search, personnel recovered 22 soap cases suspected to contain heroin.

In a separate follow-up operation, two more individuals were detained from Behiang village, with an additional 44 soap cases of suspected heroin seized from their possession. Authorities said the total quantity and market value of the narcotics are yet to be determined, as the seizures were made in remote and difficult terrain.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Thangsawmung (56), Kamkhenmung (56), Jhonmung (31), and Haukhul (55), all residents of Chikha village in Myanmar.

Police confirmed that cases have been registered at Behiang Police Station under relevant provisions of the Foreigners Act and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. Further investigation is currently underway to ascertain the network and supply chain involved.

Reacting to the development, former Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh commended the coordinated efforts of the Behiang police and the Assam Rifles. He said the arrests underscore persistent concerns over cross-border drug trafficking and illegal infiltration, calling for sustained vigilance and stronger enforcement along the border regions.

## AGP’s Atul Bora Reaffirms Push for Assam Accord, Credits NDA Governance for Stability and Growth

GUWAHATI

Atul Bora, chief of the Asom Gana Parishad and MLA-elect from Bokkhat, on Tuesday reiterated his party’s commitment to the full implementation of the Assam Accord, underscoring that several critical responsibilities rest with the Centre.

Speaking in the aftermath of the Assembly election results, Bora said the state government has already undertaken key measures toward implementing the Accord, but emphasised that the Ministry of Home Affairs remains the nodal authority for crucial components such as border sealing, protection of indigenous communities, and execution of provisions under Clause 6.

“We are committed to ensuring that all provisions are implemented in letter and spirit,” Bora said, referring to safeguards designed to preserve the cultural, social, and linguistic identity of Assam’s indigenous population.

Highlighting recent govern-



ance measures, Bora pointed to action against illegal encroachment as a factor contributing to improved law and order across the state. “People are satisfied with the eviction of encroachers. There is peace now, and that has helped attract industries,” he said, linking enforcement drives to a more stable investment climate.

The AGP leader also cited initiatives focused on women and youth welfare, noting that sustained policy interventions have helped strengthen socio-economic indicators. He credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for placing renewed emphasis on the Northeast, stating that targeted development programmes have accelerated growth in the region.

An ally of the National Democratic Alliance, the AGP has maintained its presence in Assam’s political landscape with its performance in the recent Assembly elections, continuing as a partner in the coalition government.

## Tipra Motha Rejects BJP’s Corruption Charges as ‘Poll-Time Narrative’; TTAADC Chief Lists Governance Priorities

AGARTALA/KHUMULWNG

Newly elected Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), Runeil Debbarma, on Tuesday dismissed allegations of corruption and embezzlement levelled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Tripura government against the Tipra Motha Party, terming them “baseless” and politically timed ahead of elections. Speaking after the election of the new CEM, Chairman and an Executive Member at Khumulwng, Debbarma said such accusations tend to resurface only during poll cycles. He confirmed that the oath-taking ceremony is scheduled for Wednesday, following which his administration will begin work.

Outlining his immediate priorities, Debbarma said his focus would be on improving access to drinking water, education, and healthcare within the council areas. He also



flagged financial constraints, alleging that the council receives limited funding from the state government. “We have to work within the constraints of very limited funds.

Development remains a challenge under these circumstances,” he said.

Responding directly to the corruption allegations, Debbarma called on the state government to make public any evidence of financial irregularities. “If substantial funds are being provided, let the government release the documents, sanction memos, and details in the public domain. If there is any corruption, action should be taken. These claims surface only during elections,” he asserted.

The exchange highlights continuing political friction between the ruling BJP in Tripura and the Tipra Motha leadership within the TTAADC, particularly over issues of funding, governance, and administrative autonomy.

## Women MLAs Scarce in Assam Assembly; NDA Holds 5 of 6 Seats, Opposition Limited to One



GUWAHATI

Women’s representation in the 2026 Assam Legislative Assembly remains strikingly low and unevenly distributed, with the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) accounting for five of the six elected women legislators, leaving the Opposition with just one.

In the 126-member House, only six women have secured seats amounting to roughly 4.8% of the total strength—underscoring the persistent gender gap in the state’s political landscape. Within the ruling bloc led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), three women MLAs have been elected: Nilima Devi from Mangaldai, Rupali Langthasa from Haflong, and Ajanta Neog from Golaghat. The NDA’s allies have also contributed to the tally, with Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) fielding Diptimayee Choudhury from Bongaigaon, and the Bodoland Peoples Front (BPF) electing Sewli Mohilyari from Kokrajhar.

In contrast, the Opposition’s representation among women is confined to a single legislator—Baby Begum of the Indian National Congress, who won from Dhubri. This comes despite the Congress securing 19 seats in the Assembly, highlighting a notable imbalance in gender representation within its ranks.

The skewed distribution reflects a broader structural challenge in Assam politics, where women continue to remain underrepresented across party lines. While the NDA’s sweeping electoral performance has translated into a higher share of women within its ranks, the overall numbers point to limited progress in ensuring inclusive political participation.

The composition of the new Assembly thus mirrors a familiar pattern: decisive mandates have not translated into proportional gender inclusion, leaving women with a marginal presence in the state’s legislative framework.

## “Next CM will be decided by legislative party,” says Himanta Biswa Sarma as BJP National President appoints central observers for Assam

GUWAHATI

Assam caretaker Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday cleared the path for the formation of a new cabinet by tendering his resignation. Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that BJP National President Nitin Nabin appointed JP Nadda and Nayab Singh Saini as central observers to oversee the selection of the next Chief Minister of Assam.

Talking to the reporters, Himanta Biswa Sarma said, “Shri JP Nadda and Nayab Singh Saini have been appointed as Central observers by BJP National President Nitin Nabin. Who will be the next CM and the leader will be decided by the legislative party. Following the legislature party meeting, we will come back to Lok Bhawan again and stake a claim to form a government. There is an indication that oath-taking will be post May 11 because we have invited the Prime Minister to kindly grace the swearing-in ceremony of our government this time. We have invited the PM because we got a hat-trick with a century this time.”

Meanwhile, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday handed over his formal resignation to



Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya following a decisive victory in the Assam poll.

The move marks the end of the current assembly’s term, clearing the path

for the formation of the third consecutive BJP government in the state.

Speaking to the media outside the Lok Bhawan, Sarma said that the Governor has requested him to take care of the

state till the formation of a new government.

“The ECI has officially announced the assembly election result, and the ECI has submitted the notification of the result to the Governor of Assam. I submitted my resignation letter as the Chief Minister of Assam to the Governor and simultaneously, I requested him to dissolve the current Assam assembly. The Governor of Assam has accepted my resignation letter and suggestion of dissolving the current Assam assembly, and he directed me to continue as the caretaker till the formation of a new government. I think that the new government will be formed soon. During this time, we will work as a caretaker government,” Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

On Tuesday, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma thanked the people of the state for delivering a decisive mandate to the BJP-led NDA, asserting that the result reflects public confidence in Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the government’s development agenda.

Meanwhile, the BJP and its allies secured 102 votes against 75 of 2021, with the BJP securing 82 votes with 18 new seats added to its 2021 and 2024 by-election resultant seats.

AGP secured 10 seats, BOPF secured 10 seats, taking NDA’s total to 102. While the opposition Mitrajit of INC secured 19 seats, Rajior Dal secured only 2 seats, while AJP failed to secure even a single seat. Meanwhile, AIUDF managed to get 2 seats.

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## TVK MLAs unanimously elect Vijay as legislative party leader, promise grass roots service



TAMIL NADU

After the stunning victory in the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, TVK chief Vijay on Tuesday held a meeting with the party's new MLAs, who unanimously elected him as the legislative party leader.

While the official agenda was the selection of a floor leader, the voices emerging from the meeting spoke of a broader mandate - one centred on grassroots service.

For many of the 108 newly elected MLAs, the primary takeaway from the leadership meeting was a sobering reminder of their responsibilities.

TVK leader Arunraj IRS, speaking to reporters, emphasised that the victory was not being viewed as a conquest but as a duty.

"Basically, he (Vijay) said that this is a huge responsibility which the people have given us," Arunraj said, reflecting on Vijay's address to the candidates.

"It's not any post or authority; it's a service mandate...we should always deliver to the lowest strata of people."

The diversity of the elected representatives has become a focal point for supporters.

V M Mustafa, the MLA-elect from Madurai Central constituency, pointed out that the party's success was built on inclusive representation that challenged the status quo. Mustafa highlighted that the party provided opportunities to a wide range of candidates, including 70 from Dalit backgrounds and several Muslim representatives.

Many candidates, such as Jegadeshwari K from Rajapalayam, spoke of the intense personal battles they fought to secure their wins.

"I have faced many threats...I have worked many times harder than a male candidate would have," she stated, adding that her primary goal now is ensuring her constituents receive their

promised benefits.

A fan of Vijay from Virudhachalam, Seetha Shivam said the campaign in her constituency was driven by local frustrations over social issues, including drug prevalence and the perceived neglect of the Tamil language.

The mood among the winning candidates was one of defiance against the established political giants.

MRavishankar, representing Thuraiyur, dismissed the status of the post, calling it a "responsibility" rather than a title.

"We will do everything that the Dravidian parties failed to do," Ravishankar said, pointedly noting that the party's performance was expected by the people, even if it was underestimated by the media.

He further criticised the 70-year record of previous administrations, citing the lack of basic sanitation in dozens of villages within his own constituency.

## ECI, BJP played 'nasty games': Mamata says TMC was not defeated in Bengal, refuses to resign from CM post

KOLKATA

TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday slammed the Election Commission of India (ECI) and accused it of "looting" the democratic rights of the people, a day after the BJP registered a landslide victory in the West Bengal Assembly elections.

Addressing a press conference, the outgoing CM claimed that her party had won the election morally and stated that she would not resign from her position.

"I will not resign, I did not lose, I will not go to Raj Bhavan...The question doesn't arise. No. Now, I also want to say that we didn't lose the election. Officially, through the Election Commission, they can defeat us, but morally, we won the election," the TMC leader said.

Targeting the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, Mamata described him as the "villain of this election" and accused him of "looting" the EVMs and the democratic rights of the people. She also reiterated the allegation that the ECI worked for the BJP, facilitating their win in the crucial elections.

"Two days before the election, they started arresting our people. They started raiding everywhere. They changed all IPS and IAS officers. They selected people from their party and BJP played the game directly with the Election Commission. It is a betting between the BJP and the Election Commission," Mamata alleged.

Speaking on the ECI's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls that reduced Bengal's electorate by nearly 91 lakhs, Mamata said, "We fought against all machinery. PM and HM are also involved, direct interference... They played dirty, nasty and mischievous games. I



have never seen this type of election in my life."

Mamata also repeated the allegation that she was attacked when she visited the counting centre where votes for the Bhabanipur Assembly constituency - which the TMC leader lost to BJP's Suwendu Adhikari - were being counted on Monday.

"I went inside for a few minutes. They kicked me in my belly, backside and manhandled and assaulted me. That time CCTV was off..." she said.

She also alleged manipulation and foul play in the counting process.

"After first round of counting, they started saying that BJP is getting 195-200. You didn't wait for the final result. You didn't even wait for 5-6 rounds. After that campaign

with the press media, BJP went inside the polling station and they started beating the people, counting agents," Mamata alleged.

"When I came to know that all counting agents are withdrawn, I was leading by about 30,000 and about 5 rounds were left. We should have got more than 32,000," she added.

Mamata also alleged that BJP candidate Suwendu Adhikari brought around 200 goons from outside to beat up people.

"Even women were not spared and they snatched away all forms. When I came to know, I went there. They stopped my car, but I took another route. When I entered, the CRPF told me that I was not allowed to go. I said that I am a candidate... Then I complained to the RO that

counting should be stopped immediately until normalcy is restored. I saw the DEO. I know that he gave a message to someone 15 days ago that 'counting mein khel hoga'..." she said.

Mamata earlier said she would file formal complaints with the authorities concerned against the foul play at the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' High School counting centre, where the votes for her constituency were counted.

The race took a dramatic turn over consecutive rounds, with Mamata, who established a strong lead initially, being overturned by Adhikari, who took a lead of over 500 votes after the 16th round.

Mamata also stated that several INDIA alliance leaders had reached out to her to express solidarity.

"Sonia ji, Rahul Gandhi, Arvind Kejriwal, Uddhav Thackeray, Akhilesh Yadav, Tejashwi Yadav, Hemant Soren rang me up. All the allies of INDIA Alliance told me that they are totally and absolutely with me. I think our solidarity will be united and strong for the next days," she said.

She stressed that she would now work towards strengthening the opposition alliance.

"My target is very clear. I will strengthen the INDIA team, just like a small person. I don't have a chair now, so I am a commoner," she said.

Mamata also announced the formation of a 10-member fact-finding committee to visit areas "affected by post-poll violence" and assess the ground situation.

The BJP registered a resounding victory in Bengal, winning 207 seats, well past the majority mark in the 294-member assembly and elbowing out the TMC government, which had been in power for three consecutive terms.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Hegseth and Caine say ceasefire between the US and Iran is not over



WASHINGTON

US forces are pressing ahead Tuesday with an effort to guide commercial ships through the Strait of Hormuz, but so far only two vessels, both of them American-flagged merchant ships, are known to have passed through. Joint Chiefs Chairman Dan Caine said the safety corridor in the key waterway for oil and gas transport involves guided-missile destroyers, more than 100 aircraft and 15,000 service members.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said the forces prefer a peaceful effort to "guide" the more than 22,500 mariners stuck on more than 1,550 vessels out of the Persian Gulf, but are ready if needs change. "This is a temporary mission for us," Hegseth said.

"We expect the world to step up."

It is unclear what will follow. The US Central Command said Iran earlier launched multiple cruise missiles, drones and small boats at civilian ships under the US military's protection, and that US helicopters sank six small boats involved in the attacks. It denied Iranian reports that American vessels had been struck. Iran has denounced the American moves as ceasefire violations. Caine said the ceasefire is not over. Trump's Secretary of State Marco Rubio will travel to Rome and Vatican City this week in a bid to ease rising tensions between President Donald Trump and Pope Leo XIV. Trump has lashed out at the pope again, misrepresenting the pontiff's laments about the Iran war and accusing him

of "endangering a lot of Catholics."

Meanwhile, French president Emmanuel Macron said that Iranian president asked to talk.

"I will be speaking with the Iranian president shortly at his request," Macron said Tuesday.

"France has maintained a consistent position from the start. We call for the cessation of all hostilities, the return to diplomatic negotiations, and respect for all countries in the region," Macron said. "The only possible option is the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz... and the absence of any tolls or coercive measures."

"Any unilateral escalation against tankers, container ships, or third countries is a mistake that fuels war and leads to escalation," Macron said.

## Will be 'very happy': China expresses support for a woman as next UN Secretary-General



BEIJING

China has backed the prospect of a woman becoming the next Secretary-General of the United Nations, saying it would be "very happy" to see a female leader head the global body.

In its eight-decade history, the UN has never had a woman as Secretary-General.

The selection process for the next UN chief has now begun at the organisation.

Two women - United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet and United Nations

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will complete his second five-year term as head of the global organisation in December 2026.

He assumed office in 2017 as the ninth Secretary General of the UN. The Secretary-General is appointed by the 193-member General Assembly "upon the recommendation of the Security Council", the powerful but divided 15-nation body where China, France, Russia, the UK and

the UN sit as permanent members and have veto powers. A UN General Assembly resolution adopted in September last year had noted "with regret" that no woman has ever held the position of Secretary-General and had encouraged member states to "strongly consider nominating women as candidates" for the top post.

While the selection of the Secretary General does not follow any regional rotation, it is being pointed out that the next UN chief should come from Latin America. Fu described the selection of the Secretary General as "one of the most consequential issues of the latter part of the year" for the membership of the United Nations and noted that more candidates may join the race in the coming weeks and months.

Fu added that China would also like to see the candidate for the next UN chief supporting the three pillars of the United Nations - peace and security, development and human rights.

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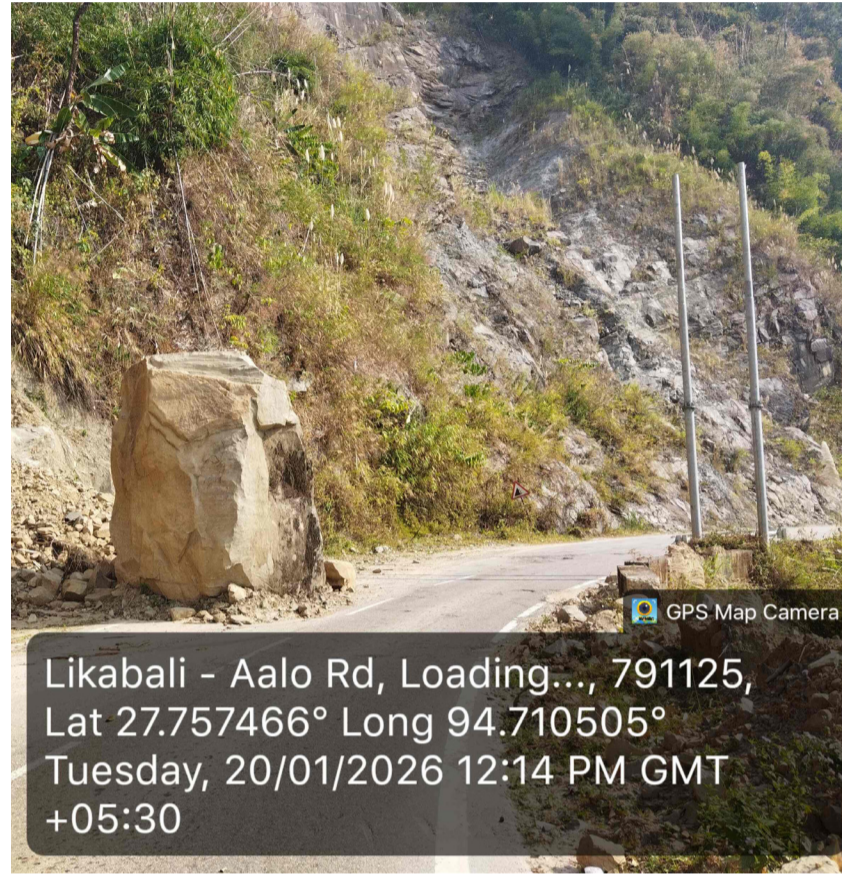
Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Secretary-General Rebecca Grynspan - are among the four candidates in the fray for the post of the world's top diplomat.

"We will be happy to see a lady SG (Secretary General), female SG...it has been 80 years, and so if we can have a female SG, China will be very happy to see," Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations Ambassador Fu Cong said here on Monday.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi and Senegal's former president Macky

## Nagaland University study highlights GIS-based solution to address soil erosion in North-East India

The researchers emphasize that such an approach not only helps control erosion but also supports long-term environmental sustainability, improves agricultural productivity, and enhances water availability



### LUMAMI, NAGALAND

A Nagaland University study has called for a scientific approach using geospatial technology to mitigate the impacts of soil erosion in the North-Eastern hilly region of India.

The researchers emphasize that such an approach not only helps control erosion but also supports long-term environmental sustainability, improves agricultural productivity, and enhances water availability.

Soil erosion is emerging as a serious environmental and ecological issue in the eastern Himalayan region, affecting agricultural productivity, water resources, and overall ecological balance. The problem is further aggravated by factors such as steep slopes, high rainfall, deforestation, unscientific land use practices, and increasing human interventions including shifting cultivation, mining and infrastructure development.

The study focuses on the Siji watershed, a part of the Gai River Basin in Assam, which represents one of the most erosion-prone regions in the Northeast. Using the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE) integrated with GIS-based modelling, the research assesses soil erosion and sediment transport by analysing key factors such as rainfall intensity, soil characteristics, slope, land use patterns, and conservation practices. The findings were published in Discover Geoscience (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s44288-026-00472-y>), a peer-reviewed journal that publishes research on monitoring, assessment, and management of environmental quality, brought out by the prestigious Springer Nature.

The Research Paper was co-authored by Prof. M. S. Rawat, Department of Geography, School of Sciences, Nagaland University along with his Research Scholar Ms. Tulumoni Gogoi and Dr. Pradeep Kumar Rawat, Consultant Professor, Asian International University, Manipur.

Speaking on the significance of the study, Prof. Jagadish K. Patnaik, Vice-Chancellor, Nagaland University, said, "The recent study on GIS-based solutions for soil erosion marks a significant step towards addressing one of the most pressing environmental challenges in North-East India. Integrating geospatial technology can effectively guide conservation efforts, ensuring reduced soil degradation while promoting sustainable land use practices. Such research contributes to long-term environmental sustainability, strengthens agricultural productivity, and improves water resource management in the region."

The findings show that areas with dense forest cover and gentle slopes experience minimal erosion, while regions with steep slopes, croplands, barren land, and human disturbances such as road construction and mining are at significantly higher risk. In some cases, erosion rates were found to be extremely high, indicating serious threats to land stability and local ecosystems.

Elaborating on how this study proposes addressing these challenges, Prof. M. S. Rawat, Department of Geography, Nagaland University, said, "We recommend an Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) approach. This includes developing sustainable land use plans and implementing mechanical and biological measures such as contouring, terracing, and vegetation cover to reduce soil loss and improve water management."

The watershed-based modelling approach allows for a more detailed and location-specific understanding of how different natural and human factors interact within a defined drainage area. By integrating spatial data layers, the model identifies erosion hotspots and quantifies soil loss across micro-level units within the watershed. This makes it possible to prioritise high-risk zones and design targeted interventions rather than



applying uniform solutions across the region.

The researchers emphasize that such an approach not only helps control erosion but also supports long-term environmental sustainability, improves agricultural productivity, and enhances water availability. The model can also guide policymakers and planners in making informed decisions about land use and conservation.

Importantly, the study suggests that the proposed framework can be adapted for other regions with similar geographical and environmental conditions, both within India and globally.

The research also highlights the need for future work, including the development of flood prediction models and better monitoring systems in the region. Given the increasing impact of human activities and climate-related factors, timely intervention is crucial to prevent further environmental degradation.

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