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PERSPECTIVE
A 2015 study found that an apple a day does not keep the doctor away.

Assam Awaits Cabinet Expansion as Speculation Grows Over New Ministers

GUWAHATI

Political activity has intensified in Assam ahead of the much-anticipated expansion of the state cabinet, with widespread speculation surrounding the likely inductees and portfolio reshuffle expected during the swearing-in ceremony scheduled for June 5.

The oath-taking ceremony will be held at the Jyoti Bishnu Kala Mandir in Guwahati at 12:45 pm, where Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is expected to oversee a significant expansion and reconstitution of the Council of Ministers.

Although the state government has not officially disclosed the names of the incoming ministers, a probable list has emerged, fueling intense discussions within political circles and the state administration.

According to sources, the lead-



ers likely to be inducted or retained in key roles include Ashok Singhal, Ranaj Pegu, Pijush Hazarika, Jayanta Malla Baruah, Bimal Bora, Kaushik Rai, Keshab Mahanta, Ashwini Rai Sarkar, Bolin Chetia, Tuliram Ronghang, Sushanta Borgohain, Mayur Borgohain and Dharmeswar Konwar. Sources also suggest that either Krishnendu Paul or Rajdeep Roy could secure a berth in the

expanded cabinet. Additionally, one among Padma Hazarika and Bhupen Borah is reportedly under consideration.

The cabinet expansion is being viewed as politically significant, coming months ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections. Political observers believe the exercise could be aimed at strengthening regional representation, balancing caste and community equations, and energising the ruling alliance ahead of the electoral contest.

However, the final composition of the cabinet and allocation of portfolios will only become clear after the official announcement and swearing-in ceremony on Friday.

Senior leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party, alliance partners, legislators and top government officials are expected to attend the event.

ANSAM Launches Protest March Demanding Safe Return of Six Abducted Naga Men

IMPHAL/UKHRUL

The All Naga Students' Association, Manipur on Thursday launched a protest march from Ukhrul District to Makhana Naga Village in Kangpokpi District via Imphal, demanding urgent action to secure the safe return of six Naga men allegedly abducted by armed militants nearly three weeks ago. The march, organised by the apex Naga students' body, aims to express solidarity with the families of the abducted men and intensify pressure on authorities to expedite efforts to trace and rescue them.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the march, ANSAM leaders said the organisation had been compelled to launch the protest after repeated appeals to the government failed to yield any concrete information about the victims' whereabouts or condition. According to the association, the six men were allegedly abducted from Leiton Vaiphei village on May 13, and despite the passage of several weeks, their fate remains unknown.

ANSAM expressed concern that even after the expiry of an ultimatum previously issued to the Government of Manipur and other concerned authorities, no substantive update had been provided regarding the safety or status of the hos-

tages. The student body also warned that both the Government of Manipur and the Government of India would be held accountable for any untoward incidents that might occur during the course of the march along the Ukhrul-Imphal highway route. The protest follows resolutions adopted during an emergency assembly convened by ANSAM at Ukhrul district headquarters on June 3. The meeting, hosted by the Tangkhul Katammao Saklong, reviewed developments in the abduction case and voiced dissatisfaction over the lack of progress in locating the missing men. Participants at the meeting reportedly noted that the prolonged uncertainty had caused significant distress to the affected families and heightened anxiety within the wider Naga community. As part of its intensified agitation programme, ANSAM resolved to undertake the march along National Highway 202 to Makhana village, where members plan to meet the families of the abducted men and extend support to them. The organisation has indicated that additional democratic forms of protest could be launched if authorities fail to provide credible information regarding the hostages or demonstrate tangible progress in the investigation.

Assam to Roll Out Cell Broadcast System for Real-Time Disaster Alerts

GUWAHATI

The Assam State Disaster Management Authority has announced the statewide implementation of the Cell Broadcast System (CBS) to provide real-time disaster alerts directly to mobile phones.

Developed by the Department of Telecommunications in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority and the Ministry of Home Affairs, the system enables geo-targeted emergency warnings to be sent instantly to all mobile devices in affected areas.

The technology was tested in Assam as part of a nationwide pilot project launched in May and will now be implemented across the state through ASDMA.

Officials said the system can issue alerts for floods, flash floods, cyclones, heavy rainfall, storms, lightning and other disasters. Unlike regular SMS messages, CBS alerts appear as pop-up notifications with a distinctive alarm tone and vibration and remain effective even during network congestion.

The system supports multiple languages and works across 2G, 3G, 4G and 5G networks.

ASDMA said the initiative will strengthen Assam's disaster preparedness and help authorities deliver timely warnings, particularly to people in vulnerable and remote areas.

WHO SAID WHAT



Take the road less travelled. In Assam, it ALWAYS leads to somewhere magical.

Come, explore #AwesomeAssam ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam CM

NEC Plenary Opens in Shillong, Amit Shah Leads High-Level Northeast Development Review



SHILLONG

The 73rd Plenary Session of the North Eastern Council (NEC) commenced in Shillong on Thursday, bringing together the political leadership of the Northeast to deliberate on the region's development priorities, connectivity initiatives and economic growth strategies.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who chairs the NEC, presided over the high-level meeting at the State Convention Centre in Shillong. The session was attended by chief ministers, governors and senior officials from all eight northeastern states.

The plenary meeting is focusing on a wide range of issues, including infrastructure development, regional connectivity, investment promotion, tourism, power, education and inter-state cooperation. The gathering is also expected to review the progress of ongoing projects and assess measures to accelerate growth across the Northeast.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma shared a photograph from the session on social media platform X, describing Amit Shah as the "Architect of Peace in modern India."

"Team North East with the Architect of Peace in modern India, Adarni Amit Shah ji, the Chairman of North Eastern Council, 73rd Plenary of NEC, Shillong," Sarma wrote.

The meeting has brought together

the chief ministers and governors of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim. Discussions are expected to centre on enhancing regional cooperation, improving connectivity networks and identifying new opportunities for economic expansion.

Officials said the council is likely to examine recommendations submitted by various sector-specific task forces constituted to explore growth prospects and address developmental challenges in the region. Key sectors under review include tourism, agriculture, sports, infrastructure and investment promotion.

The NEC plenary, held annually, serves as the apex policy-making forum for the Northeast, providing a platform for the Centre and state governments to jointly formulate development strategies and monitor the implementation of major projects. Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region Jyotiraditya M. Scindia underscored the collective vision for the region, posting on X: "United in our resolve to realise a stronger, more prosperous #RisingNortheast."

Earlier, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said the session would place special emphasis on strengthening regional cooperation and advancing recommendations put forward by sectoral task forces. He noted that the deliberations would help shape future development initiatives aimed at unlocking the Northeast's economic and social potential.

Functioning under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), the NEC plays a pivotal role in planning, funding and coordinating projects designed to ensure balanced and sustainable development across the northeastern states.

CACHAR POLICE SEIZE MASSIVE DRUG HAUL

SILCHAR

In a major crackdown on narcotics trafficking, Cachar Police conducted a series of coordinated operations across the district, leading to the seizure of large quantities of heroin, codeine-based cough syrup and tramadol tablets, while arresting several suspected drug traffickers and peddlers.

The biggest haul was made by personnel of Udharbond Police Station, who intercepted an Intra B-10 truck (AS11DC-8629) following specific intelligence inputs. During a thorough search of the vehicle, police recovered 8,010 bottles of codeine-based cough syrup, each containing 100 ml, along with 150 packets of tramadol tablets.

According to police, each packet contained 10 strips with 24 tablets per strip, taking the total seizure to 36,000 tramadol tablets. The truck driver, identified as Gyas Uddin Laskar of Durganagar Part-V under Udharbond Police Station, was arrested in connection with the case.

In a separate operation, Kalain Police intercepted a truck (AS01EC-2533) at Digorkhal while it was heading towards Kalain. A search of the vehicle led to the recovery of 14 soap cases containing approximately 170 grams of suspected heroin. One person, identified as Azaduddin of Natanpur under Kalain Police Station, was taken into custody.

Meanwhile, under Silchar Police Station, police apprehended a suspected drug peddler, Ajim Uddin Laskar alias Kala, near Fatok Bazar.

Officers recovered 35 vials containing around 1.7 grams of suspected heroin from his possession. In another significant seizure near Silchar Railway Station, police arrested an alleged woman drug peddler, Gul Nihar Begum Laskar. During the operation, officers recovered 15 soap cases containing approximately 298 grams of suspected heroin.

Myanmar Refugee Influx Increasing Pressure on Mizoram: Lalduhoma



SHILLONG/AIZAWL

Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma expressed concern over the continuing influx of refugees from Myanmar, stating that the growing number of displaced people seeking shelter in the state has become a significant burden on local resources and administration.

Speaking in Shillong on June 4, Lalduhoma said the ongoing geopolitical crisis and armed conflict in Myanmar are driving more people across the international border into Mizoram, with further arrivals expected in the coming months.

"Due to the geopolitical condition there, we are getting many displaced people nowadays. It's likely that we will get more people seeking safety. This has become a burden for us," the Chief

Minister said.

Mizoram, which shares a long and porous border with Myanmar, has witnessed a steady influx of refugees since political unrest and armed clashes intensified in the neighbouring country. The state has been providing shelter and humanitarian assistance to thousands of displaced persons, many of whom share close ethnic and cultural ties with communities in Mizoram.

The Chief Minister's remarks come amid mounting concerns over the humanitarian, administrative and financial challenges posed by the prolonged refugee crisis. State authorities have repeatedly pointed to the increasing strain on public infrastructure, welfare schemes and local resources as refugee numbers continue to rise.

Despite these challenges, the Mizoram government has maintained its humanitarian approach towards those fleeing violence and instability in Myanmar, citing longstanding historical and ethnic connections between people on both sides of the border. Lalduhoma's comments are expected to reignite discussions on the need for greater assistance from the Centre, as well as coordinated measures to address the refugee situation while reducing the burden on the northeastern state. Officials have indicated that the evolving situation in Myanmar remains a matter of concern, with Mizoram continuing to monitor developments closely amid fears of fresh waves of displacement.

Tripura Expands Grape Mission After Successful Sweet Grape Harvest, Trials Planned for 18 More Varieties

AGARTALA

Buoyed by the successful cultivation of sweet grapes in the state, the Tripura government has announced an ambitious plan to expand grape farming through large-scale varietal trials, research initiatives and farmer training programmes.

Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath said the state would undertake trials on 18 additional grape varieties while strengthening scientific research and technological support to promote commercial grape cultivation.

The minister made the announcement while addressing a field day-cum-awareness programme on commercial grape cultivation and the launch of projects funded by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) at Chandipur in Unakoti district.

During the programme, Nath visited an orchard where sweet grapes have reportedly been cultivated successfully for the first time in the region, marking a significant milestone for horticultural diversification in the state. Agricultural equipment was also distributed among farmers to encourage modern farming practices.

Highlighting the potential of grape cultivation, the minister noted that India's average grape productivity stands at



around 24 metric tonnes per hectare and said Tripura is exploring ways to replicate such success under its agro-climatic conditions.

He said scientists in the state have already developed four grape varieties through research efforts, including two varieties suitable for wine production.

"We will explore how best to support grape growers and ensure proper training is provided for scientific cultivation practices. After nearly two decades, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Unakoti, revived its research and development work on grape cultivation in 2024, and early results show promising improvements in sweetness, yield and fruit quality," Nath said.

According to the minister, six grape varieties sourced from the ICAR-National Research Centre for Grapes were introduced in Tripura in September 2024 as part of experimental cultivation trials.

Officials said the state's grape cultivation programme faces several challenges, including high rainfall, elevated humidity levels, poor sweetness in some grape varieties, limited access to agrochemicals and a lack of technical expertise among farmers.

To overcome these obstacles, researchers have introduced specialised agronomic practices such as scientific nutrient management and the use of growth regulators aimed at improving fruit sweetness,

quality and productivity.

The government's future roadmap includes:

- Conducting trials on 18 additional grape varieties.

- Expanding research and technology development activities.

- Providing intensive training programmes for farmers.

- Establishing grape cultivation clusters and vineyards.

- Ensuring access to quality planting materials and technical guidance.

- Promoting value-added products such as grape juice and Ready-to-Serve (RTS) beverages.

Nath also announced plans to strengthen post-harvest management and establish cluster-based small-scale juice processing units to help farmers secure better returns and generate local agro-industrial employment opportunities. The initiative is expected to diversify Tripura's horticulture sector and create new income streams for farmers by introducing a high-value crop traditionally associated with western and southern India. Officials believe the early success of sweet grape cultivation could pave the way for the development of a viable grape industry in the state if ongoing trials continue to produce encouraging results.



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SIR OF ELECTORAL ROLLS

Supreme Court of India on May 27, 2026 upheld the legality of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral roll in Bihar and elsewhere and emphasized that this exercise is constitutionally connected to "free and fair polls". The judgment strongly underlined the purity and accuracy of rolls giving priority to preventing bogus voters entering into the voter lists (deletion), but at the same time did not give equal weightage to, rather pushed into the rear, the task of protecting every eligible citizen's right to vote (inclusion). This is where significant concerns lie, despite the judgement.

Before going into details of the judgement, it would be worth recalling the respective position of the ruling BJP and the political parties in opposition. The Ruling BJP and the Election Commission of India (ECI) have always emphasized on cleaning the electoral rolls after deletion of ineligible voters including Bangladeshi infiltrators, while the opposition has always grudged this and emphasized on protecting every eligible voter's right to vote.

We have seen all through the SIR process the struggle between the two priorities – deletion of voters and the protection of citizens' right to vote. At no point of time the so called "pure" voter list prepared by the ECI was complete even though election to the Legislative Assembly of West Bengal is over and results are out. The Tribunals are hearing the cases of excluded voters who could not exercise their right to vote, many of whose names were cleared only after the election was over, that benefited the BJP. The current judgement therefore suffers from giving less priority to "protection of the citizen's right to vote" than deletion of voters for so called "purity" of electoral roll. One can therefore easily differ as to what constituted "purity" of the voter list that is prerequisite for "free and fair" polls.

Critics of the judgement argue that the Supreme Court failed to substantively examine the way SIR was implemented and undermined free and fair elections. The court chiefly examined whether the ECI had statutory and constitutional powers under Article 324 and the Representation of the People Act. The court gave less attention to whether the SIR exercise could disproportionately disenfranchise poor, migrant, minority, or document-deficient voters? The court justified the ECI's requirement of documents, but on Aadhaar, it said that it can be accepted as an "additional indicative document" in future, which cannot itself determine citizenship status. It should be noted that the bench itself had earlier acknowledged a possible "margin of error" in mass verification process. Yet in the latest judgement it seemed treating the mechanism as institutionally reliable without fully addressing whether large-scale verification can realistically avoid arbitrary deletions. The bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Jyotirmoy Bagchi has pronounced the judgement after hearing a bunch of petitions that have challenged the notification issued by the ECI in June 2025 to conduct SIR in Bihar. The bench said, "When the statute itself authorises a special revision at any time, for reasons to be recorded and in such manner as the Election Commission may deem fit, the impugned exercise cannot be invalidated merely because it does not conform in every respect to the ordinary modalities contemplated for routine revision. In our considered opinion, the impugned SIR does not supplant the Representation of the People Act and the Rules. Rather, it breathes life into the constitutional mandate under Article 324 within the precise statutory contours provided by Section 21(3). Therefore, it cannot be said that the Commission has acted in excess of its statutory powers."

The bench emphasized on the claimed objective of the SIR and said that it bore nexus with the constitutional goal of ensuring free and fair elections. It also noted that elections did not rest merely on the mechanics of polling but fundamentally depended on the integrity, accuracy, and credibility of the electoral rolls, which formed the foundation of the democratic process.

Every word of the bench seems to be important, but has different meanings for different people. What constitutes "integrity, accuracy, and credibility of electoral rolls"? Answer to this question is not clear when we go through the judgement, since this is precisely the opposition's allegation that "integrity, accuracy, and credibility of the electoral rolls" have been compromised because the PM Narendra Modi led government and the ECI have conspired to get SIR done in a particular manner. Therefore the "foundation of the democratic process" that is preparation of pure and credible voter lists with integrity and accuracy remains questionable in the light of the decisions of the Tribunals in West Bengal which has been finding thousands of eligible citizens who were excluded from the electoral roll violating their right to vote.

CJI Kant has observed, "Calling upon electors to furnish supporting material in the course of such an exercise does not amount to negation of the presumption. Rather, it reflects the procedural mechanism through which the Commission seeks to reaffirm or, where necessary, correct existing entries. The presumption continues to operate, but it does not negate the possibility of verification."

Moreover, the court said that ECI has power to go into questions of citizenship for the purpose of including in the electoral roll, but the negative determination of the ECI does not result in a conclusive finding that the person is not an Indian citizen. CJI pronounced, "The consequence of such a citizenship determination is correspondingly limited. It affects the individual's entitlement to be included in the electoral rolls and thereby the right to participate in the electoral process. It does not, however, operate to divest the individual of claims to citizenship, nor does it foreclose adjudication of that question by the competent authority under the Citizenship Act."

Where will the country be moving from SIR? There is an indication in the judgement itself. It says, in cases where commission is not satisfied that a person fulfils the statutory conditions for inclusion in the electoral rolls, it would be incumbent upon the Commission to refer such an individual to the competent authority of the Union Government for adjudication in accordance with law.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Vision is not enough - it must be combined with venture. It is not enough to stare up the steps - we must step up the stairs. - Vaclav Havel

INDIA AND THE WORLD THE MYANMAR TEST



BY DR. D.K. GIRI

Why did Myanmar's President Min Aung Hlaing choose New Delhi for his first foreign visit, and what should India do next? It must be acknowledged that in diplomacy, a head of state's first overseas visit carries significant meaning. It reveals whom a leader trusts, fears, or needs. At the same time, it can also be a "game of confidence."

Last Monday, Myanmar's president arrived in New Delhi. As reported, this was his first foreign trip since assuming office in April this year. He chose Delhi over Beijing or Bangkok. Why? And what should New Delhi do with this gesture of trust?

I have been reflecting on this question since his visit. Myanmar is not just another neighboring country. It shares a 1,643-kilometre border with India and represents a test of India's foreign policy—a test of geography, history, democracy, and what I call "strategic maturity": the courage to pursue national interests without compromising national character.

Let me explain. Why Was Delhi His First Destination?

There may be three practical reasons.

First, security. Myanmar borders India's sensitive northeastern states—Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh. Insurgent camps operate across the border, while arms trafficking, drug smuggling, and refugee movements continue to pose challenges. President Hlaing understands this reality. Therefore, he came with a promise: "We will not allow Myanmar's territory to be used against India's security interests."

This statement, made at Hyderabad House, carries considerable significance.

For nearly two decades, India has been Myanmar's quiet partner in counterinsurgency efforts through initiatives such as Operation Sunrise, intelligence-sharing arrangements, and border-fencing projects. Few countries provide Myanmar with this kind of security cooperation. China offers roads and loans; India facilitates joint patrols and operational coordination. In a region where the sound of guns often speaks louder than diplomacy, such cooperation matters greatly.

Second, connectivity. Two major Indian projects in Myanmar have remained stalled for years:

• The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, which aims to connect Kolkata with Mizoram through Sittwe Port.

• The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, India's overland gateway to Southeast Asia and ASEAN.

Both projects are reportedly around 80 percent complete and require sustained political cooperation from Myanmar to reach completion. Hlaing's visit was also a signal that Myanmar remains committed to moving these projects forward.

For India, this is not charity. It is the practical implementation of the Act East Policy. Without Myanmar, India cannot achieve meaningful land connectivity with Southeast Asia.

Third, strategic balancing. China has expanded its footprint in Myanmar significantly. Under the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, Beijing has invested approximately \$21 billion in infrastructure and development projects. China is also financing the Kyaukphyu deep-sea port, operating oil and gas pipelines into Yunnan Province, supplying weapons, and providing diplomatic support to Myanmar at the United Nations.

Myanmar understands the risks of overdependence. Consequently, every Myanmar leader—including military leaders—has sought to maintain ties with India as a counterbalance.

Hlaing's visit to Delhi sends a message to Beijing: "We have alternatives." It also signals to Washington: "Do not lecture us."

He came not out of affection, but to strengthen leverage. Every nation seeks to balance competing powers in order to preserve foreign-policy independence. India calls this multi-alignment. Myanmar is entitled to pursue the same approach.

The Historical Significance of India-Myanmar Relations

India and Myanmar are far from strangers. The two countries share Buddhism, tea traditions, and cultural connections stretching back generations. General Aung San, the father of Aung San Suu Kyi, studied at Santiniketan. Former United Nations Secretary-General U Thant of Myanmar was a close friend of Jawaharlal Nehru.

In 1948, India became the first country to recognize Myanmar's independence. During the 1950s, both nations emerged as important voices in the Non-Aligned Movement. Communities on both sides of the border regularly crossed for marriages, funerals, and festivals.

This shared history gives India something China cannot purchase: grassroots trust.

When India builds a bridge, people often say, "Delhi helped us." When China builds one, the first question is frequently, "How much debt comes with it?"

Yet history alone is not policy. Sentiment cannot stop a Chinese submarine from appearing at Kyaukphyu. For that, strategy is required.

The China Question

India cannot realistically remove China from Myanmar.

The two countries share a 2,200-kilometre border. Bilateral trade exceeds \$12 billion. Chinese-backed pipelines are already operational.

Therefore, India's objective should not be to replace the yuan with the rupee. The real goal should be ensuring that Myanmar does not become a strategic dependency of China in a manner that threatens Indian interests.

How can this be achieved? Three Steps India Should Consider

1. Finish what has already been started.

Speed itself is strategy. Every month of delay in completing the Kaladan project makes Sittwe Port appear increasingly dependent on Chinese alternatives. India must deploy the necessary funding, personnel, and monitoring mechanisms to complete these projects.

A dedicated Prime Minister's Office cell for Myanmar projects should be established, with weekly reviews and strict timelines.

If India delivers roads, electricity, and ports, Myanmar's leadership will always have a reason to pick up the phone and call Delhi.

2. Leverage India's strengths. While China specializes in hard infrastructure, India can excel in soft infrastructure:

- Information technology
- Pharmaceuticals
- Higher education
- Governance training
- Digital public services

India could offer 1,000 scholarships to Myanmar students and expand training programs for government officials, particularly in e-governance.

A Myanmar bureaucrat educated at an Indian institution such as an IIM is less likely to view Beijing as the only strategic partner available.

3. Engage all stakeholders while maintaining strategic focus.

India should continue engaging Myanmar's military authorities on security and connectivity issues.

At the same time, channels of communication should remain open with democratic forces, civil society organizations, and ethnic groups—quietly and without public grandstanding.

The United States may choose a policy of public criticism. India must pursue a policy of engagement and influence.

That is what diplomacy requires: dealing with today's government while preserving relationships with tomorrow's leaders.

The Democracy Dilemma

New Delhi faces a genuine dilemma regarding democracy in Myanmar.

Should India actively support democratic restoration even if doing so comes at a strategic cost? Many in the West answer yes. They argue that India, as the world's largest democracy, should impose sanctions on Myanmar's military rulers just as the United States has done.

The argument is grounded in democratic values.

However, values detached from geography often become moral lectures. Values informed by geography become policy.

The reality on the ground is straightforward.

If India withdraws, China will fill the vacuum almost immediately—with more weapons, more ports, and greater strategic influence along India's northeastern frontier.

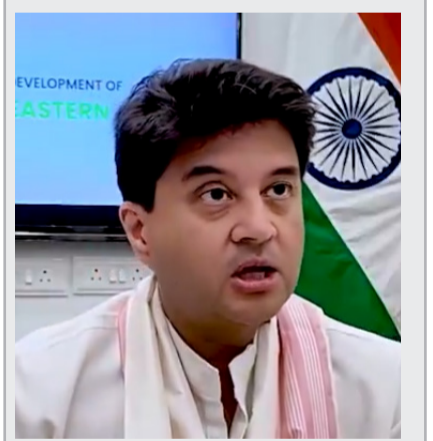
Refugee flows into Mizoram and Manipur could increase. Insurgent groups could find new opportunities. And Myanmar's people would still not necessarily obtain genuine democracy; they might simply become more dependent on Chinese-backed political arrangements.

A Test of Indian Diplomacy
Every neighboring country tests India in a different way.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

- Mizo Ginger Mission
 - Naga Coffee Mission
 - Arunachal Kiwi Mission
 - Assam Muga Silk Senhajari Mission
 - Tripura Queen Pineapple Mission
 - Sikkim Organic Food Mission
 - Manipur Polo
 - Meghalaya Lakadong Turmeric
- Taking the Unique Strengths of Ashtalakshmi to the world** 🇮🇳
#RisingNortheast

~ Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Union Minister, DoNER



Pakistan tests India's patience. China tests India's strength. Myanmar tests India's balance. Can India secure its borders without behaving like a bully? Can it compete with China without imitating China? Can it uphold democratic values without sacrificing essential security interests?

President Hlaing's visit has given India an opportunity to answer these questions.

The answer appears clear: India should work with whichever government is in power in Myanmar to secure the Northeast, complete critical connectivity projects, and prevent the Indian Ocean from becoming a strategic sphere dominated by China.

This is the essence of the Neighbourhood First Policy. This is also the essence of the Act East Policy.

For India, Myanmar is not a problem to be solved. It is a relationship to be managed.

And that relationship must be managed with history in our hearts, geography in our minds, and strategy in our hands.

Assam Launches Rs 3,875-Crore World Bank-Backed Road Project for Dima Hasao

GUWAHATI

The Assam government on Wednesday launched the Rs 3,875-crore Assam Disaster Resilient Hill Roads Development Project (ADRHRDP), a major infrastructure initiative aimed at improving climate-resilient connectivity and strengthening disaster preparedness in the hill district of Dima Hasao.

Funded jointly by the Assam government and the World Bank, the project seeks to enhance transport infrastructure while addressing the growing risks posed by landslides, floods and other climate-related hazards in the region.

The project was formally unveiled during a workshop at the Assam Administrative Staff College in Khanapara, attended by representatives of the World Bank, senior government officials, technical experts, consultants, contractors



and other stakeholders involved in its implementation.

According to an official statement, the total project cost is estimated at Rs

3,875 crore, including Rs 3,100 crore in World Bank assistance and Rs 775 crore as the state government's contribution.

The six-year project, scheduled for implementation over 72 months, is expected to directly benefit nearly 1.9 lakh people, particularly those living in remote tribal and rural areas of Dima Hasao.

Beneficiaries are expected to include farmers, women's self-help groups, local traders, small and medium enterprises, transport operators and stakeholders linked to the tourism sector.

A major component of the initiative involves upgrading around 360 kilometres of roads across the district. The project will also rehabilitate 148 kilometres of existing road stretches and introduce Performance-Based Maintenance Contracts (PBMC) covering approximately 155 kilometres to

ensure long-term road quality and sustainability. Beyond road infrastructure, ADRHRDP will incorporate a range of innovative measures aimed at improving resilience and accessibility. These include the development of rural freight corridors, pilot ropeway systems and Flood and Landslide Early Warning Systems (FLEWS) to strengthen disaster preparedness and emergency response capabilities. Officials said the project adopts an integrated approach that combines transport development with climate adaptation and risk reduction strategies.

The launch workshop featured technical sessions on resilient road design, environmental and social safeguards, procurement procedures and implementation frameworks. Participants also examined challenges arising from recurring landslides, flash floods and extreme

weather events in hilly terrain. Experts highlighted lessons from previous disaster incidents, including the Dharali disaster in Uttarakhand, to underline the importance of resilient infrastructure planning and proactive risk mitigation.

Describing ADRHRDP as one of the most significant externally aided infrastructure projects undertaken in the Northeast, the Assam government said the initiative is expected to transform connectivity and support long-term socio-economic growth in the state's southern hill district.

Officials added that the project's multi-sectoral framework is designed not only to improve transport links but also to boost economic opportunities, strengthen disaster resilience and enhance the quality of life for communities across Dima Hasao.

Arunachal Christian Forum Gives State Govt 15-Day Deadline Over APFRA Rules

ITANAGAR

The Arunachal Christian Forum (ACF) has issued a 15-day ultimatum to the Arunachal Pradesh government, demanding an immediate halt to the process of framing and notifying rules under the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 1978 (APFRA), and warning of statewide democratic protests if its concerns remain unaddressed. In a memorandum submitted to Chief Minister Pema Khandu, the forum expressed strong opposition to efforts to operationalise the decades-old law through the formulation of implementing rules.

The ACF stated that the Christian community is concerned that enforcement of the Act could have significant implications for constitutional rights, religious freedom and social harmony in the state. According to the memorandum, recent developments involving the High-Powered Committee constituted to examine issues related to APFRA have created widespread apprehension among sections of the population. The forum alleged that the process is being pursued without adequate consultation with religious groups, civil society organisations and other stakeholders.

The organisation argued that any policy decision affecting religious freedom and inter-community relations should be preceded by broad-based consultations and meaningful dialogue involving all concerned groups. It further cautioned that moving ahead with the notification and implementation of the rules without consensus could lead to avoidable tensions and social unrest.

In its memorandum, the ACF placed three principal demands before the state government:

Tripura Human Rights Commission Seeks Reports on Two Alleged Hospital Negligence Deaths

AGARTALA

The Tripura Human Rights Commission (THRC) has taken suo motu cognisance of two separate cases of alleged medical negligence resulting in deaths at government hospitals and has sought detailed reports from the state's health authorities within 15 days. The commission issued notices to the Directorate of Health Services following media reports concerning the death of a patient at Govind Ballabh Pant Hospital (GBP Hospital) and the death of a pregnant woman at Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGM Hospital). In the first case, THRC Chairperson Arindam Lodh took note of a news report published on June 1 under the headline, "Patient in critical condition in toilet for a long time, then died there."

According to the report, the patient was allegedly found lying in a toilet inside the Medicine Ward of GBP Hospital for an extended period on May 31. It was alleged that no med-

ical officer or nursing staff attended to the patient despite his condition. Family members later recovered the patient, but he had reportedly died by then.

"The Commission has taken a serious view of the allegation since it shows a blatant violation of the human rights of the patient in GBP Hospital," the order stated.

The commission said it considered the allegations serious enough to warrant an official response and directed the Director of Health Services to submit a factual report within 15 days before any further proceedings are initiated.

In a separate order, the THRC examined reports regarding the death of a pregnant woman at IGM Hospital. Newspaper reports published on May 30 alleged that the woman died because medical officers were not available when required, raising concerns about the quality of health-care services at the facility.

Assam, Meghalaya Reach Interim Farming Pact to Ease Tensions in Lapangap Border Area

SHILLONG

Assam and Meghalaya have agreed on a temporary arrangement allowing villagers from both states to continue cultivation in designated parts of the disputed Lapangap region, a move aimed at easing tensions and maintaining peace until a permanent boundary settlement is reached.

The understanding was reached during a joint meeting held on Tuesday at an Assam Police camp in the area, where representatives of both governments, local bodies, civil administration and police officials discussed measures to prevent further friction in the border region.

Under the agreement, residents of Lapangap village in Meghalaya will be allowed to cultivate paddy in the low-lying fields, while villagers from Tahpat in Assam will continue growing seasonal crops such as banana, pineapple, ginger and other produce on the surrounding hills and slopes.

Officials described the arrangement as a practical interim solution designed to protect the livelihoods of local residents while broader discussions on the boundary dispute continue.



"The Meghalaya villagers will cultivate paddy in the fields, and the villagers from Assam will cultivate crops such as banana, pineapple, ginger and other similar crops on the hills and slopes," sources familiar with the meeting said.

Both sides also agreed that the issue of permanent boundary demarcation in the disputed area would be left to a higher-level committee for future consideration.

As part of the understanding, the two states committed themselves to maintaining peace and preventing any activity that could disrupt law and order in the area.

"Both sides shall maintain peace, harmony and tranquillity and shall

refrain from any activity that may create disturbance or affect the prevailing law-and-order situation," officials said.

The decision followed extensive consultations involving political leaders, senior bureaucrats, police officials and representatives of local communities, who agreed that a temporary cultivation-sharing arrangement was the most viable way to reduce tensions on the ground.

The Meghalaya delegation led by Deputy Chief Minister Sniwalbalang Dhar and included Principal Secretary Frederick Kharkongor, Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council Chief Executive Member Thombor Shiwat, West Jaintia Hills Deputy Commissioner Abhinav Sin-

gh and Superintendent of Police Jagpal Singh Dhanoa.

The Assam side was represented by Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang, Member of Parliament Amarsing Tisso, Additional Chief Secretary Ajay Kumar Tiwari, KAAC Executive Member and MLA Surjya Rongphar, West Karbi Anglong Deputy Commissioner Preeti Kumari and Superintendent of Police Dinesh Kumar.

The meeting was convened after a recent discussion between Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati, where both leaders agreed on the need to defuse tensions in the Lapangap area while efforts continue toward a long-term resolution of the interstate boundary dispute.

The interim pact is expected to provide immediate relief to local communities dependent on agriculture and help maintain stability in one of the unresolved sectors along the Assam-Meghalaya border.

Conrad Sangma to Push Unified Northeast Tourism Strategy at NEC Plenary

SHILLONG

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma will lead discussions on strengthening the Northeast's tourism sector as he chairs a high-level tourism task force during the 73rd plenary session of the North Eastern Council (NEC) on June 4.

The Chief Minister is expected to present the task force report, highlighting the region's tourism potential and advocating for a coordinated approach to promote the Northeast as a single tourism destination rather than as individual state markets.

Speaking ahead of the plenary session, Sangma said the task force would examine both the strengths and challenges of the tourism sector across the region while proposing measures to unlock its full potential.

"I will chair the task force on tourism and we will be presenting tomorrow. We will be talking about how the Northeast as a whole represents a potential market for tourism," he said.

The NEC has constituted sector-specific task forces covering tourism, youth development, infrastructure, trade and other priority areas. Their recommendations are expected to form a key part of discussions during the plenary session, which will be chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Jyotiraditya Scindia, governors, chief ministers and senior officials from all eight Northeastern states are also expected to attend the meeting.

Sangma said the consultations would focus on collaborative devel-

opment strategies and stronger inter-state coordination.

"I expect we will have diverse consultation and participation on major sectors. The DoNER Minister had set up task forces for different sectors for the Northeast and wants states to work together," he said.

During his presentation, the Meghalaya Chief Minister is likely to showcase the unique tourism strengths of individual Northeastern states while stressing the benefits of marketing the region under a common brand. The proposal is expected to focus on integrated tourism circuits, improved connectivity and coordinated promotional campaigns.

Officials said Meghalaya's recent success in attracting tourists could serve as a model for other states. The presentation is also expected to feature best practices

and success stories from across the region that could be adapted elsewhere.

The task force is likely to identify key challenges affecting tourism growth, including inadequate transport and communication networks, infrastructure gaps, shortages of trained manpower and funding constraints. Recommendations are expected to focus on addressing these bottlenecks to create a more competitive and sustainable tourism ecosystem.

Meanwhile, following the NEC plenary session, Union Health Minister J. P. Nadda is scheduled to visit Shillong on June 5. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is also expected to visit Meghalaya later this month as the Centre continues its engagement with Northeastern states on development and investment priorities.

Assam CM Meets President Murmu, Highlights State's Growth and Development Vision



NEW DELHI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday called on President Droupadi Murmu and briefed her on the state's economic progress, infrastructure initiatives and future development roadmap during his first meeting with the President since securing a second consecutive term in office.

Describing the President as an embodiment of resilience and leadership, Sarma said the interaction was both encouraging and inspiring.

"Meeting the President is always an inspiring experience and her words act as an encouragement in our path of public service," the Chief Minister said in a social media post following the meeting.

During the interaction, Sarma outlined Assam's recent economic achievements and shared his government's plans to sustain the state's development momentum.

"I briefed her on Assam's ongoing growth journey as India's fastest-growing state and how we plan to take this momentum forward," he said. The Chief Minister added that he sought the President's blessings and guidance as the state government continues to focus on public welfare, infra-

structure expansion and economic growth.

The meeting took place on the fourth day of Sarma's visit to the national capital, where he has been engaging with senior Union leaders, industry representatives and policymakers to discuss investment, development and governance-related issues.

As part of his Delhi schedule, the Chief Minister earlier met Jagrut Kotecha, Chief Executive Officer of PepsiCo India, to review the company's existing operations in Assam and explore future expansion opportunities in the state.

Following the meeting, Sarma said Assam was steadily emerging as a preferred destination for industrial investment and manufacturing activities, driven by improving infrastructure and a business-friendly environment.

Earlier in the day, he also held discussions with Jitin Prasada, Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry and Electronics and Information Technology.

The Chief Minister's ongoing engagements in New Delhi come amid the Assam government's efforts to attract greater investment, accelerate infrastructure projects and strengthen the state's position as a key economic growth centre in the Northeast.

Mizoram Introduces 'Red Card' Permits for Medical Liquor Use Amid Policy Relaxation

AIZAWL

The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM)-led Mizoram government has introduced a new permit system allowing residents to legally possess and consume liquor for medical purposes, marking a significant step in the state's gradual relaxation of its long-standing prohibition regime.

A government notification issued on Tuesday announced that eligible individuals can apply for a permit known as a "Red Card" under Section 45B(1) of the Mizoram Liquor Prohibition (Amendment) Act, 2025.

Applicants will be required to pay a permit fee of Rs 50 and an annual renewal and retention charge of Rs 5,000.

The move reflects the government's continuing efforts to ease restrictions in a state that has historically maintained some of the country's strictest controls on the sale, possession and consumption of alcohol.

Under the amended law, permission may be granted by the Commissioner or an authorised officer to individuals who possess a prescription from a registered medical practitioner. The prescription must also be countersigned by the concerned Medical Superintendent before a



permit is issued.

According to the provisions of the amended legislation, Red Card holders will be allowed to purchase and consume liquor strictly on medical grounds. However, the permit does not

allow public consumption.

The law specifically prohibits permit holders from consuming alcohol in public places, institutions, hotels or any location accessible to the general public.

Mizoram has remained largely dry

Quest!

In Japan, depression is described as "kokoro no kaze" – a cold of the soul.

Prof. M. M. Goel Calls for Needonomics-Based Entrepreneurship at Bharat Startup Summit 2026



NEW DELHI

Addressing a session on "Education, Innovation and Entrepreneurship" at the Bharat Startup Summit 2026, organized by CCI India at the India International Centre, Prof. Madan Mohan Goel, Propounder of the Needonomics School of Thought and former Vice-Chancellor, called for the adoption of the Needonomics approach to promote ethical entrepreneurship and sustainable development in India's rapidly expanding service sector. Smt Anandiben Patel Governor Uttar Pradesh graced the occasion and addressed online.

Prof. Goel emphasized that Gita-inspired Needonomics provides a value-based framework for strengthening the linkages between academia, innovation, and entrepreneurship, which is essential

for building a future-ready and ethically driven startup ecosystem.

Prof. Goel explained the contribution of Needonomics in driving sustainable economic growth and nurturing the next generation of innovators, entrepreneurs, and startup leaders. He stressed that India must encourage its youth to become job creators rather than job seekers and highlighted the immense potential of entrepreneurship in the tourism sector, which possesses one of the highest employment multipliers and can significantly contribute to inclusive economic development.

While acknowledging the service sector's vital role in economic growth, employment generation, innovation, and global competitiveness, Prof. Goel cautioned against excessive commercialization and profit-centric business

models. He observed that such practices often lead to consumer exploitation, unethical conduct, workplace stress, environmental degradation, and widening socio-economic inequalities.

Advocating a transition from greed-driven economics to need-driven entrepreneurship, Prof. Goel argued that business success should be measured not merely by profits but by its contribution to societal well-being, stakeholder trust, sustainability, and social harmony. He identified trust, transparency, compassion, inclusiveness, accountability, and ecological sensitivity as the core values of ethical entrepreneurship.

Prof. Goel stated that the NAW (Need, Affordability, and Worth) approach to entrepreneurship is key to achieving Viksit Bharat through ethical, inclusive, and sustainable growth.

From 215 to 20 in a month: The stunning collapse of Mamata's political empire

KOLKATA

For a politician who built her career on defiance, resilience and an instinctive understanding of Bengal's political pulse, the past month, marking the aftermath of the West Bengal Assembly election results, has been nothing short of a political earthquake for Mamata Banerjee.

Exactly a month ago, Banerjee remained the undisputed face of the Trinamool Congress (TMC), commanding a formidable legislative force. But the party's crushing electoral defeat at the hands of the BJP dramatically altered the political landscape.

The setback was made more personal by her own loss from Bhabanipur to archrival Suvendu Adhikari in a constituency long regarded as her political fortress.

The poll results reduced the TMC's strength in the Assembly to 80 MLAs, leaving Banerjee to lead the opposition from a position of unprecedented weakness. The party had secured 215 MLAs in the 2021 state polls.

Yet, what appeared to be a devastating electoral defeat has rapidly evolved into an existential crisis for the party she founded in 1998.

On Wednesday, a group of dissident TMC legislators submitted letters of support from 58 MLAs to Assembly Speaker Rathindra Bose, backing expelled leader Ritabrata Banerjee as the leader of their legislature party and staking claim to the position of Leader of the Opposition.

Ritabrata claimed that the rebel faction had two additional MLAs in reserve. The move, which subsequently received the Speaker's approval, effectively signalled that more than two-thirds of the party's legislators had drifted away from Banerjee's authority within the Assembly.

Only days earlier, the TMC had expelled Ritabrata Banerjee and fellow MLA Sandipan Saha for alleged anti-party activities, accusing them of undermining the organisation. Instead of extinguishing the rebel-



lion, the expulsions appear to have accelerated it.

The TMC's journey in the Bengal Assembly mirrored its meteoric rise until its recent decline. Riding a historic anti-Left wave, the party secured 184 seats in 2011 and, along with allies, ended the Left Front's 34-year rule. It consolidated its dominance with 211 seats in 2016 before reaching its peak in 2021, winning 215 of the Assembly's 294 seats under Banerjee's leadership.

Political observers note that Banerjee now faces a challenge unlike any she has encountered in nearly three decades of public life. She has survived electoral setbacks, central investigations, organisational revolts and ideological battles. But this crisis strikes at the very heart of her authority, control over the party apparatus and legislative wing.

"There was little surprise involved in the disintegration of the party once it suffered electoral defeat. That's because the party's primary objective, to remove the Left Front from state power, was met once it won the 2011 polls," said political analyst Shubhomoy Maitra.

"It had no ideological fulcrum or, for that matter, a long-term development vision for the state. There was nothing left for its MLAs to hold on

to, except personal interests," he said.

In an apparent attempt to regain control, the TMC dissolved several key organisational committees and frontal wings, a move widely interpreted as a last-ditch effort to prevent a formal split.

Banerjee has accused the BJP of using "money, arrests and threats" to engineer a split in her party. Speaking at a recent protest, she alleged that a concerted campaign was underway to fracture the TMC and weaken opposition politics in Bengal.

The BJP, meanwhile, has little incentive to immediately absorb the dissidents. Several analysts point to the Maharashtra precedent, where a breakaway faction was encouraged to emerge as a separate political force rather than being directly merged into the ruling party.

The growing references in Bengal to an "Eknath Shinde model" reflect concerns that the state's politics may be entering a similar phase of realignment.

"Despite Mamata Banerjee's remarkable public life, one cannot ignore the fact that she is past 70. At this age, a turnaround with the same vigour she displayed over the last four decades seems difficult, unless a politically improbable situation emerges

that scripts her comeback," Maitra said.

Yet, writing Banerjee's political obituary would be premature.

Few leaders in contemporary Indian politics possess her capacity for political reinvention. She rose from the margins to dislodge the 34-year-old Left Front government, survived repeated predictions of decline and transformed a regional movement into one of India's most influential opposition parties.

Even now, the dissident camp has carefully continued to acknowledge her as party chairperson, suggesting that the revolt is directed more against the existing leadership structure than against Banerjee herself.

Senior TMC leader Saugata Roy said there is a strong possibility that Banerjee will overcome the current crisis, given her track record as a fighter. "Such periods of crisis are temporary in political life. Only a decade ago, the BJP had just three seats in the Assembly. Look where they are now," he said.

"Even this won't last forever. Mamata needs to wait this out. These so-called rebel MLAs will also return to the party fold sooner rather than later," the veteran leader added.

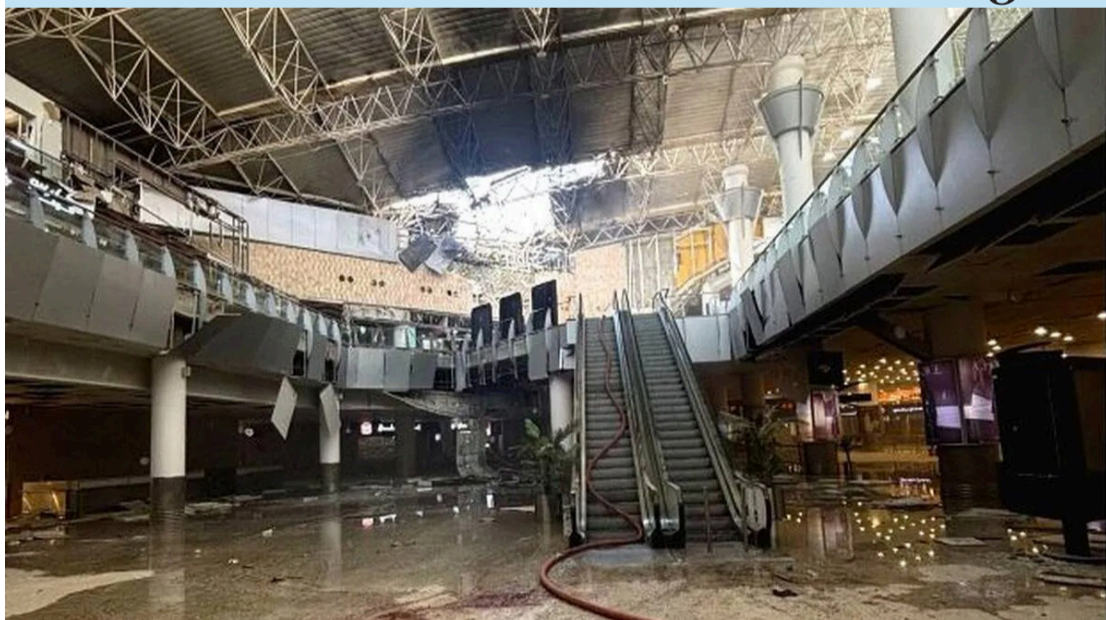
Asked whether, in the wake of the MLA mutiny against Abhishek Banerjee, Mamata Banerjee had reached a point where she must choose between the party and her nephew, Roy dismissed the suggestion as "superficial".

"There's no need for a knee-jerk reaction to a political problem such as this. Let's see how she handles this," he said.

Observers believe the central question is whether Banerjee can once again convert adversity into opportunity. If she succeeds in portraying herself as a victim of political engineering, she may retain her stature among grassroots workers. If she fails, the crisis could mark the beginning of the most dramatic unravelling of a political empire Bengal has witnessed since the decline of the Left Front.

INTERNATIONAL

Attack on Kuwait international airport kills Indian national, injures 63



KUWAIT CITY

An Iranian attack killed an Indian national and injured 63 people at Kuwait's international airport, forcing it to close temporarily, in the first deadly strike on the Gulf since an April 8 ceasefire came into place.

The attacks, which Kuwait says damaged unnamed diplomatic missions, test a ceasefire that has largely held despite sporadic strikes.

It largely halted more than a month of war, sparked by US and Israeli attacks on Iran, during which Iran launched thousands of missiles and drones at Gulf nations.

Iran accused Kuwait and Bahrain of allowing the United States to use their territory to launch attacks on an Iranian tanker and island.

Tehran said it attacked the US Navy's Middle East headquarters in

Bahrain as well as the Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait, but did not mention the airport.

Health ministry spokesman Abdullah al-Sanad said 25 ambulances were dispatched at Kuwait International Airport, adding that "63 injured individuals were received and distributed among hospitals... This includes serious injuries... including head wounds, cerebral haemorrhages, amputations and injuries resulting from explosions."

Those included "civilians, and people working at the airport and travellers," it added.

The airport compound includes Cargo City, a base used by US forces but at a distance from the civilian terminals.

Kuwait's foreign ministry said Iranian attacks on its territory killed one person and damaged unnamed

diplomatic missions.

The Indian foreign ministry said one of its citizens was killed at the airport and condemned the strike. "We again call on all parties to cease such attacks" on civilian targets, it said in a statement. An airport source told the deceased was a traveller.

Demonstrators wave Iranian flags during a pro-government gathering at Islamic Revolution Square in Tehran, Kuwait's ministry of defence spokesman Saud Abdulaziz Al-Atwan said 30 ballistic missiles and drones were launched as part of the "heinous Iranian aggression" that caused "significant material damage to the building."

Kuwait's state news agency said civil aviation authorities had suspended traffic and transferred arriving flights to alternative airports after "Terminal One came under Iranian

attacks causing casualties and damage."

Air traffic partially resumed later in the day, with all Kuwait Airways flights operating again.

Kuwait's international airport was targeted several times during the war, and had only fully resumed operations on June 1.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards blamed the US for targeting an Iranian oil tanker and communications tower on the country's Qeshm Island.

"In response to this aggression, the Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait, which hosts helicopters, as well as the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, were targeted with missiles and drones by the Guards' forces," the Guards said in a statement on their official Telegram channel.

The Gulf has borne the brunt of Iran's attacks during the war, which began when the United States and Israel attacked Iran and killed its senior leadership in late February.

Tehran has repeatedly accused Kuwait and other Gulf countries of allowing US forces to launch strikes from their soil, claims they have denied.

Earlier, the US military said that it had "successfully defeated" a series of Iranian missile and drone attacks on Kuwait and Bahrain and conducted strikes on Iran's Qeshm Island.

"Two Iranian missiles fired at Kuwait fell short or broke apart en route, and three missiles launched at Bahrain were immediately intercepted by US and Bahrain air defense forces," Centcom said in a statement.

The US military command for the region, CENTCOM, posted on X: "All Iranian attacks on American forces failed."

Bahrain authorities said they had intercepted three missiles and a number of drones launched by Iran.

BNP, Jamaat, Bangladesh's interim govt involved in Osman Hadi's murder, claims his brother



DHAKA

The brother of a youth leader who played a key role in Bangladesh's 2024 student-led protests has alleged that members of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), opposition Jamaat-e-Islami and advisers to the interim government conspired to have him killed last year.

Sharif Osman Hadi, a critic of India and of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina's now-disbanded Awami League, emerged as a prominent figure during the protests that eventually led to her removal from power.

He founded Inqilab Mancha and was contesting as an independent candidate in parliamentary elections when he was shot during campaigning on December 12 last year. He died six days later.

General elections

interim government and lawmakers and ministers of the BNP government were directly involved in murdering Shaheed Osman Hadi," Omar Hadi wrote in the first post.

"Honourable Prime Minister (Tarique Rahman), expose to justice all those who were involved in Hadi murder," wrote Omar, who currently serves as a diplomat in the UK as the Yunus-regime gave him the compensation appointment following his brother's killing. He warned that unless the murderer/s were held, "they will kill you (Rahman) too."

Two Bangladesh nationals, identified as Rahul alias Faisal Karim Masud, 37, and Alamgir Hossain, 34, residents of Patuakhali and Dhaka respectively, were apprehended from West Bengal's border town of Bongaon in North 24 Parganas district on the intervening night of March 7 and 8 for allegedly killing Sharif Osman Hadi.

Masked gunmen shot him in the head in Dhaka during electioneering. He was eventually taken to a Singapore hospital where he died six days later.

Osman's death triggered violent protests by his supporters in Dhaka and other parts of Bangladesh, including attacks on news papers and progressive cultural groups and lynching of a Hindu factory worker in central Mymensingh.

The situation forced a key aide of Yunus on home ministry affairs and former police chief Khuda Baksh Chowdhury to quit the government.

TMC's Great Schism: Can the New Trinamool Escape Mamata's Shadow?

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Every political split is now official. The Trinamool Congress has fractured, with 59 of its 80 MLAs breaking away from the party founded and led by Mamata Banerjee. In numerical terms, the rebels hold the advantage. In political terms, however, the battle has only just begun.

The emergence of what is being dubbed "TMC 2.0" raises a fundamental question: can a party born out of rebellion against its founder evolve into a viable political force in its own right?

Political history suggests that successful parties generally rest on three pillars—an identifiable ideology, a charismatic leader, and a loyal support base. The challenge confronting the new Trinamool is whether it possesses any of these in sufficient measure.

The breakaway faction is likely to inherit the party's name and symbol, assets that carry enormous political value in a state where electoral branding matters. Yet symbols alone do not guarantee legitimacy. The more difficult task will be convincing voters that the new leadership represents something more than a legislative coup.

At the heart of the debate lies the question of popular support. Can TMC 2.0 inherit the backing of the roughly 41 percent of voters who supported Mamata Banerjee and the Trinamool Congress in the last election? Or were those votes primarily cast for Mamata herself rather than for the party's legislators?

The distinction is critical.

The 59 defecting MLAs undoubtedly won under the Trinamool banner, but electoral mandates in West Bengal have often been deeply personalized. Voters frequently identified with Mamata Banerjee's image, welfare schemes, political messaging and anti-establishment appeal rather than with individual candidates.

This creates the central dilemma faced by

That formula worked because Mamata herself served as the binding force holding these diverse strands together.

TMC 2.0 must now explain what it stands for beyond opposition to Mamata Banerjee.

If the rebels argue that they represent a more democratic, efficient and less personality-driven version of the Trinamool, they may have an organizational argument. But organizational reform rarely excites voters.

Electorates are typically mobilized by identity, aspiration, grievance or belief. Political movements succeed when they tell a compelling story about the future.

Without such a narrative, the new party risks appearing not as a movement but merely as a faction.

Indian politics offers lessons in both success and failure.

The split within the Shiv Sena demonstrated that control over party structures, legislators and symbols can provide significant advantages. Yet even there, the struggle for electoral legitimacy remains ongoing.

On the other hand, Indian political history is littered with breakaway groups that briefly controlled legislatures before disappearing once voters returned to the original leadership.

The Congress party itself, from which the Trinamool Congress emerged, offers several examples. Every major split ultimately

favoured the faction that combined ideological clarity, charismatic leadership and mass support. Groups that lacked one or more of these elements gradually faded into irrelevance.

Even the Forward Bloc, founded by the immensely charismatic Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, struggled to maintain relevance after his death. Bereft of a distinct ideological mission and a leader of comparable stature, it gradually became a marginal force.

Similarly, Congress (O), formed after senior leaders broke away from Indira Gandhi, failed to establish a compelling identity despite initially possessing organizational resources and influential figures. It was eventually eclipsed by Indira's faction, which combined socialist rhetoric, strong nationalism and her own formidable political charisma.

West Bengal's own political history offers another cautionary tale. The Bangla Congress, founded by former Chief Minister Ajoy Mukherjee in 1966, briefly wielded significant influence and even led governments. Yet it disappeared before it could complete five years as an independent force.

History therefore poses a difficult challenge to TMC 2.0.

Possessing legislators is not enough. Possessing a party symbol is not enough. Even inheriting organizational infrastructure and financial resources may not be enough.

The breakaway faction may gain access to substantial assets, including the organizational network painstakingly built over nearly three decades and potentially significant financial reserves accumulated over multiple election cycles.

Yet names, symbols and bank balances are ultimately claims to legitimacy, not legitimacy itself.

To convert those claims into political reality, the new party must create meaningful political content. It must articulate an ideology that voters can understand and distinguish from what Mamata Banerjee, the BJP and the Left Front already offer.

Only then can it hope to establish an independent political identity.

For now, Bengal's political observers are watching closely to see whether Ritabrata Banerjee can emerge as more than the leader of a legislative rebellion. The state's famously argumentative electorate will demand answers to difficult questions.

What does TMC 2.0 stand for? Why should voters abandon Mamata Banerjee? What future does it offer that existing parties do not? Until convincing answers emerge, the new Trinamool will remain trapped in the long shadow of its founder.

The split may have created a new party on paper. Whether it creates a new political movement is a question only Bengal's voters can answer.

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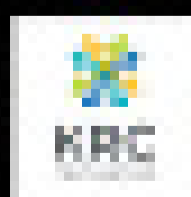


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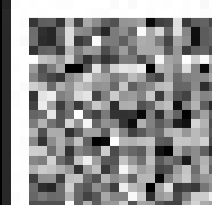


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