



North-east poll results suggest minimal change

PRO-INCUMBENCY is finding its way into the lexicon this election season — first with Gujarat, and now with the North-east states of Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya. It is ironic that this remains in conflict with sentiments for the Centre, where anti-incumbency seems to be a plausible reality.

The Congress' shrinking influence is evident; although it retained power in Meghalaya, it suffered a heavy blow in the rest of the North-eastern states in the Assembly elections. Tripura Chief Minister, Manik Sarkar celebrated victory with a three-fourths majority, marking the return of the Left for the fifth time. Perhaps, it is the relative peace in the previous terms that has led to power both, Mr Sarkar in Tripura, as well as Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio of the Nagas People's Front (NPF)-led Democratic Alliance of Nagaland.

Although there is much difference from previous elections because of the delimitation exercise, the turnout figures of 93.5, 83 and 88 per cent in Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya respectively are rather telling. While in Tripura it marks a gradual marriage between strong ideological dispensation and economic modernisation, in Nagaland it displays the disillusionment of people from outfits claiming to represent their interests.

If recent events such as External Affairs Minister Salman Kurshid's visit to Bangladesh and proposals to link the North-east with Myanmar are indications of increasing seriousness about the Look East Policy, the decision to keep the Budget and North-east polls on the same day is once again evidence of the step-treatment meted out to these geo-politically important states.