

FREE OF OPPOSITION: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON POLITICS IN NAGALAND AFTER THE ELECTION

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In Nagaland, which voted for the continuation of the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP)-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) coalition, in the Assembly election held on February 27, power sharing among various interest groups is often predicated on the fact that the State's fortunes are deeply tied to its relations with the Centre. The party in power in Delhi gets a significant say in the State's politics. In the NDPP-BJP 40-20 seat understanding, their [coalition won 37](#). The rest was shared by several parties, such as Nationalist Congress Party, which stands third with seven seats. Politics in Nagaland is such that nobody wants to be in the Opposition and all MLAs have now extended support to the NDPP-BJP government. Far from being a sign of healthy political unity, the complete absence of an Opposition in the Assembly has pushed the State to a new low in terms of a lack of legislative accountability. The purported reason for this scandalous unity that started in the previous Assembly is to jointly work towards resolving the "Indo-Naga political issue" that pertains to a settlement with separatist organisations. But in practice, this has now become a scramble for a share in the power pie.

[Neiphiu Rio, who remains in the saddle as Chief Minister](#), enjoys the trust of the BJP, which has got five berths in the Council of Ministers. Mr. Rio's defection from the Congress sent that party in a downward spiral, even as he became the Chief Minister in 2003 after joining the NPF. There are two firsts in the State Assembly as well — two women Members, one of whom is also the first woman Minister in the State, which is remarkable considering Nagaland's patriarchal character. Former Chief Minister T.R. Zeliang, who moved to the NDPP from the NPF in 2022, is a Deputy Chief Minister. The representation of the regions of Nagaland and the major Naga communities is more balanced this time. The State faces serious development challenges and its governance deficiency is severe, which have been attributed to years of extremism and associated extortion — something that is only partly valid. What is closer to the truth is the assumption that political parties too have developed a stake in the stalemate. A demand for statehood for six districts in eastern Nagaland has added a new fault line. The NDPP-BJP alliance won nine of the 20 seats in this region. In an Assembly without an Opposition, the accountability of the government could be elusive. Effectively, politicians have betrayed the trust of the people in Nagaland.

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