

## West Bengal Gets its First BJP Chief Minister

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### Summary

*The appointment of Suwendu Adhikari as the new chief minister of West Bengal became fairly apparent after he defeated his predecessor Mamata Banerjee on her home turf in Kolkata's Bhabanipur constituency. The new Bharatiya Janata Party government has been active in its first few days in office while the ousted Trinamool Congress is trying to regroup after a bruising loss.*

Following the landslide victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in West Bengal, Suwendu Adhikari was sworn in as the state's first ever BJP chief minister on 9 May 2026, which coincided with the birth anniversary of [Rabindranath Tagore](#).

Though the BJP high command is often known to install relatively lesser-known leaders as chief ministers in states under their control, Suwendu's choice was somewhat predictable. Besides having earlier been the BJP's leader of opposition in West Bengal, he became the frontrunner for the chief minister's chair by defeating three-time chief minister Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata's Bhabanipur constituency. This was the second time he had defeated Mamata, having also done so in the 2021 assembly election from Nandigram, where he won again this time. Suwendu vacated the Nandigram seat on 13 May 2026 since a legislator can only represent one seat.

### Background of the Chief Minister

Suwendu is a second-generation politician with his father Sisir Adhikari having been a three-time member of West Bengal legislative assembly, a three-time member of the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) and a Union Minister from 2009 to 2012 in the Manmohan Singh cabinet. Sisir began his political career with the Congress, switching to the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in its early days before moving to the BJP in 2021.

Like his father, Suwendu too has switched parties, starting with the TMC and rising up the ranks before shifting allegiance to the BJP in 2020, months before the 2021 West Bengal assembly elections. Suwendu's political base is West Bengal's Purba (East) Medinipur district, which is now a family pocket borough, with one of his brothers a member of parliament and another a member of the legislative assembly (MLA) from there.

Suwendu was an important ally of Mamata during the Nandigram anti-land acquisition movement, which propelled the TMC to power in West Bengal in 2011. Elected as a TMC MLA in 2006, Suwendu later won from the Tamluk Lok Sabha seat in Purba Medinipur in 2009 and again in 2014. In 2016, he quit parliament and was elected an MLA from Nandigram. He served in Mamata's cabinet from 2016 to 2020, as minister of transport and environment minister.

Suvendu was one among a few senior TMC leaders who were alleged to have been caught taking bribes in a [sting operation in 2014](#), the tapes of which were released just before the 2016 West Bengal elections. While some of the TMC leaders were arrested and spent time in jail, charges were dropped against both Suvendu and Mukul Roy, both of whom had since switched to the BJP.

## The 2026 Election and Beyond

Since Suvendu joined the BJP, the party has had mixed success, not doing as well as expected in the 2021 assembly election and the 2024 general election. However, in the just-held assembly election, Suvendu was a leading and aggressive campaigner sometimes resorting to [communally charged speeches](#). After being sworn in as chief minister though, he has said that he [“belongs to everyone”](#).

Suvendu would be well aware that expectations are high of the new government and the voters who backed the BJP expect transformative changes in West Bengal, especially on the economic front. The new government’s entire cabinet is yet to be announced. The ministers sworn in along with Suvendu are Dilip Ghosh, Agnimitra Paul, Nitish Pramanik, Ashok Kirtania and Kshudiram Tudu. Of the five, perhaps the most significant portfolio – panchayat and rural development – has been allocated to Ghosh, a former BJP state president. Ghosh is also tipped by some to be in the running for the deputy chief minister’s post due to his lengthy association with the BJP as well as his proximity to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

In his first few days as chief minister, Suvendu has taken a slew of decisions, including the implementation of the centrally-funded health insurance scheme, Ayushman Bharat, in West Bengal and transfer of land to the Border Security Force along the Bangladesh border to build a fence. The government will also implement the Annapurna Bhandar scheme from 1 June 2026, providing ₹3,000 (\$47) to women beneficiaries, which replaces the earlier Lakshmir Bhandar scheme. However, the government has clarified that voters, under adjudication due to the Election Commission’s Special Intensive Survey, will not have [access to these schemes](#).

There has been a significant bureaucratic shake-up too with Manoj Kumar Agarwal, who, as chief electoral officer (CEO), conducted the recent assembly elections in West Bengal, being appointed as the state’s chief secretary. Earlier Subrata Gupta, who was the special observer in the CEO’s office, was appointed adviser to the chief minister.

The TMC, in opposition for the first time in 15 years, is in some disarray. [Internal rifts](#) are now out in the open and some party leaders have blamed Mamata’s nephew Abhishek Banerjee and the decision to hire a professional agency, I-Pac, to direct strategy, for the poll debacle. The party seems to be going back to its old-timers by appointing a veteran, the 10-time MLA Shobandeb Chattopadhyay, as the leader of the opposition in the West Bengal legislature. However, with legislatures dysfunctional in most Indian states, the TMC will have to find other forums to make a political impact.

West Bengal's history suggests long periods of one-party dominance, be it the Left Front for 34 years and, most recently, the TMC for 15 years, but decimation of the ruling party once it is voted out. Whether the TMC and Mamata can escape that fate remains to be seen.

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