

Aerial mapping



In a significant and strategic move, the Union ministry of home affairs has given the go-ahead for a laser-based aerial mapping of the 267-km stretch of the Indo-Bhutan border along Assam, which could aid security agencies to pinpoint militant hideouts through remote sensing, says a report in the Guwahati-based *Assam Tribune*.

The adverse Indo-Bhutan terrain has, over the last few years, been a major den for insurgent groups, especially the banned National Democratic Front of Bodoland (Songbijit). Top leaders of the insurgent group, including the elusive and most-wanted militant G Bidai, are also believed to be hiding somewhere along the Indo-Bhutan border.

Widely known as Lidar (light detection and ranging) survey, the highly critical and ambitious project would see mapping experts using light in the form of pulsed laser to measure ranges of variables from the ground and detect surface characteristics.

The idea behind opting for the survey is also to penetrate through the uninhabited thick forest and uneven terrain so as to enable linkage of border guarding forces and prevent crime along the Indo-Bhutan border, which is manned by the Sashastra Seema Bal. The laser-based aerial mapping to be executed by the State home department will be funded by the border management department of the MHA.

Sources informed that although the Centre's long-term plan is to survey the entire 699-km Indo-Bhutan border, also passing along Arunachal Pradesh (217 km), West Bengal (183 km) and Sikkim (32 km), the laser-mapping would begin from Assam.

"Keeping in mind the sensitivities and strategic coordination along the Indo-Bhutan border, the laser-based aerial mapping would be able to penetrate through the thick forest and uneven border, which would go a long way in aiding the surveillance mechanism," sources in the State home department told *The Assam Tribune*.