

# Irom Sharmila suffers defeat, gets only 90 votes

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IMPHAL: Rights crusader Irom Sharmila Chanu's dreams to become a legislator got dashed on Saturday after she suffered a humiliating defeat in the hands of three-time Congress chief minister Okram Ibobi Singh in the assembly elections.

Of all the five candidates who are in the fray in Thoubal, Ibobi Singh polled 18,649 votes, while Sharmila got a meagre 90 votes. BJP nominee L Bashanta Singh got 8,179 votes. L Suresh Singh of AITC and Independent candidate AK Manglemjao Singh got 144 and 66 votes respectively. The NOTA column was hit by 143 votes.

But all is not lost as the Iron lady of Manipur who has vowed to continue her crusade against the controversial Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA). "I knew it would be a very difficult task for me to fight a three-time chief minister in this election. I got 90 votes which I consider very precious," Sharmila told this reporter a few minutes after the results were declared on Saturday.

"As the chief minister had paid no heed to my call to repeal AFSPA during my 16-year-long fast, I had come out to fight against him through electoral politics. Though I have been defeated, I'll continue to fight against the draconian Act," she added.

Unlike other parties, PRJA candidates did not organise election feasting and meetings, she said. She added that they only held group discussions and door-to-door campaigns. "Besides extending financial aid for our poll expenses, people appreciated our fight," said the rights crusader who ended her fast against AFSPA on August 9 last year.