

## India State Elections: The BJP Ahead in Assam, Close Contest in Kerala

Ronojoy Sen

### Summary

*Assam and Kerala go to the polls on 9 April 2026. While the Bharatiya Janata Party is the frontrunner in Assam, it could be a tight contest in Kerala between the Left Democratic Front and the Congress-led United Democratic Front.*

Of the four states going to elections in April 2026, two states – Assam and Kerala – have a single-day poll on 9 April 2026. The results for both states will be announced along with the others on 4 May 2026. The two states in different corners of India – Assam in the northeast and Kerala in the deep south – represent contrasting dynamics. Assam has been a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-ruled state for the past decade and the incumbent government in Kerala is the two-term Left Democratic Front (LDF).

### Assam

The ruling BJP government in Assam, headed by Himanta Biswa Sarma, is in pole position for a third consecutive term. The BJP first came to power in Assam in 2016 by unseating the three-term Congress government led by Tarun Gogoi. In the 2021 Assembly elections, the BJP-led alliance, comprising the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and a smaller party, won 75 seats in the 126-seat Assam Assembly. The BJP, on its own, won 60 seats and it replaced the sitting chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal with Sarma, who had defected from the Congress in 2015. The Congress, which was in alliance with the All India United Democratic Front, the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) and a host of smaller parties, trailed well behind the BJP with 29 seats.

An important change from 2021 is a delimitation exercise that happened in Assam in 2023. This exercise saw the creation of six constituencies through the merger of existing ones and the creation of 15 constituencies through the redrawing of boundaries. Perhaps the biggest impact of delimitation will be on Muslim representation in the state. Analysts believe that the constituencies where Muslim voters play a decisive role have come down from [around 35 to about 23](#). This change is partly reflected in the BJP's selection of candidates which does not include a single Muslim. In 2021, the BJP had fielded nine Muslim candidates. The BJP's sole Muslim Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from 2021 has also not been renominated.

Sarma, who has conducted a concerted [campaign against Bengali-speaking Muslims](#), is contesting from Jalukbari, a constituency that has been affected by delimitation. Some areas from the former Guwahati West constituency have been incorporated into Jalukbari, and some added to adjacent Assembly segments. That is unlikely to affect Sarma's

prospects, who has been winning from here since 2001 and is looking to better his margin of victory from 2021.

In the current election, [opinion polls](#) have predicted that the BJP-led alliance, which now includes the BPF, besides AGP, might increase its seat share. The BJP, which is contesting 90 seats this time, three less than in 2021, is banking on a combination of veterans and fresh faces. It has renominated over half its sitting MLAs. The rest are either newcomers or those who contested elections earlier but did not win.

## **Kerala**

Kerala has traditionally seen a switch between the LDF and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) in every Assembly election except in 2021 when the LDF retained power. In a departure from the normal playbook, the Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF won a second consecutive term in 2021 by increasing its seat tally to 99, compared to 91 in 2016. The UDF was a distant second with 41 seats.

In the current election, the contest between the LDF and UDF, in all probability, could be a tight one. [One opinion poll](#) has predicted that both alliances will win between 60 and 70 seats each in the 140-seat Kerala Assembly and around 39 per cent of the vote share. When the same poll was conducted earlier, the LDF had an edge, suggesting that the race has tightened in recent days. Even on the question of leadership, respondents were fairly evenly split between the incumbent Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the UDF's V Satheesan. The third player in the race, the BJP, is predicted to win between one and five seats.

While the primary contest will be between the LDF and the UDF, the BJP could be a factor in some of the 42 constituencies in south Kerala following its win in the Thiruvananthapuram Municipal Corporation in 2025. The Nemom seat, which falls within the Thiruvananthapuram parliamentary constituency, in particular, will be closely watched. Nemom was where the BJP had won its first seat in Kerala when the party's O Rajagopal emerged a winner in 2016. This time, it is a three-cornered fight between Education Minister V Sivankutty of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)], the BJP state president and former Union minister, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, and the Congress's K S Sabarinadhan.

Sabarimala has emerged as an electoral flashpoint following the 2018 Supreme Court ruling allowing women of all ages to enter the temple. The ruling triggered widespread protests and has since become a political issue. The alleged Sabarimala gold theft case has added a new twist to the debate. In Aranmula, one of the largest constituencies in Kerala and one of the assembly segments in Pathanamthitta, where the temple is located, CPI(M) leader and Health Minister Veena George is up against BJP's Kummanam Rajasekharan, former Mizoram Governor, and Congress's Abin Varkey.

## **Conclusion**

A BJP win in Assam will bolster its stranglehold over the northeast. In Kerala, a win for the UDF – even a narrow one – would provide some relief to the Congress which has hardly any

states under its control. For the LDF, a record successive third term will keep the Left parties afloat in the only state where it has the ability to form the government.

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Dr Ronojoy Sen is Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance) at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore (NUS). He can be contacted at [isasrs@nus.edu.sg](mailto:isasrs@nus.edu.sg). The author bears full responsibility for the facts cited and opinions expressed in this paper.