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Assembly Elections 2026 — Voting Concludes in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)**ALSO FROM THE CREATOR****BharatNotes**Free UPSC notes, MCQs, PYQ analysis. **100% Free.**bharatnotes.com →**ADVERTISE****Advertise with Ujiyari**

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Assembly Elections 2026 — Voting Concludes in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry

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WHY IN NEWS

Polling concluded on April 9, 2026, for legislative assembly elections in Assam (126 seats), Kerala (140 seats), and Puducherry (30 seats), with exceptionally high voter turnout across all three states/UTs. Results are expected on May 4, 2026.

India’s 2026 general round of state assembly elections covers multiple states simultaneously, testing political equations between NDA, INDIA bloc, and regional parties across geographically and culturally distinct polities. The April 9 phase — covering Assam, Kerala, and Puducherry — saw some of the highest-ever turnouts recorded in these states, reflecting high political mobilisation.

VOTER TURNOUT — APRIL 9 PHASE

STATE/UT	TOTAL SEATS	TURNOUT	KEY CONTEST
Assam	126	85.70%	BJP-NDA vs Congress-led alliance
Kerala	140	78.25%	LDF (CPM) vs UDF (Congress)
Puducherry	30	89.87%	AINRC-BJP vs Congress-DMK

Results date: May 4, 2026

Coming Phases

- **April 23, 2026:** Tamil Nadu (234 seats), West Bengal Phase 1
- **April 29, 2026:** West Bengal Phase 2
- **May 4, 2026:** Counting for all phases

STATE-WISE ANALYSIS

Assam (126 Seats)

Assam is a BJP stronghold under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who won a strong mandate in 2021. The 2026 election tests whether BJP can repeat that performance or if anti-incumbency factors — including protests over the Unified Pension Scheme transition and APSC recruitment irregularities — dent its support.

Key issues: NRC/CAA implementation, APSC recruitment scam, unemployment among educated youth, tea garden workers' wages, floods and erosion in Brahmaputra valley.

Key constituency: Jalukbari (CM Himanta's seat — BJP stronghold)

Relevant constitutional provisions:

- Article 170: Composition of State Legislative Assemblies (min 60, max 500 seats)
- Assam: 126 seats — one of the smaller assemblies

Kerala (140 Seats)

Kerala has historically alternated between the Left Democratic Front (LDF, CPM-led) and the United Democratic Front (UDF, Congress-led) every election since 1980 — a pattern unique in Indian politics. LDF under CM Pinarayi Vijayan won a landmark back-to-back victory in 2021 — breaking the alternation pattern for the first time in 4 decades. The 2026 election tests whether LDF can secure an unprecedented third consecutive term.

Key issues: Kerala's fiscal crisis (debt/GSDP ratio ~38%), unemployment among NRI-returned youth, gold smuggling case fallout, women's self-help group (Kudumbashree) performance, Vizhinjam port development.

Gender note: Kerala has the highest female voter turnout among major states historically.

Puducherry (30 Seats)

Puducherry's governance structure makes it constitutionally unique — it is a Union Territory with a legislature under **Article 239A**, distinct from both Delhi (Article 239AA) and ordinary UTs. The Lieutenant Governor has significant powers, leading to recurring Centre-state frictions similar to Delhi's situation.

Key issues: Statehood demand, Centre-UT power dynamics, fisheries development, Tamil identity issues (linguistic and cultural alignment with Tamil Nadu).

Current alliance: AINRC (led by former CM N. Rangasamy) allied with BJP; Congress allied with DMK.

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK — ELECTIONS IN INDIA

Article 324 and the Election Commission

The Election Commission of India (ECI) — a constitutional body under Article 324 — is the sole authority for superintendence, direction, and control of elections to Parliament and state legislatures. The Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners have constitutional protection — removal requires a process akin to removal of a Supreme Court judge.

Delimitation of Constituencies

- **Article 82:** Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after each Census
- **Delimitation Commission:** Statutory body; its orders have the force of law and cannot be challenged in any court
- **Freeze:** Assembly seat numbers have been frozen since 1977 Amendment (in force until 2026 Census-based delimitation); the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (2023) links women's reservation implementation to delimitation

First Past the Post (FPTP) System

India uses the FPTP system for Lok Sabha and state assembly elections — the candidate with the most votes wins, regardless of majority. This produces disproportionate seat-vote ratios but enables clear majorities. Critics argue Proportional Representation (PR) would better reflect voter preferences.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS2: Polity — Electoral System, Federalism

Key analytical issues for Mains:

- ① **Centre-State dynamics in concurrent elections debate** — simultaneous Lok Sabha + assembly elections (“One Nation One Election”) is under active consideration; separate election cycles deplete governance bandwidth
- ② **Puducherry's governance paradox** — UT with legislature lacks full statehood powers; LG vs elected government conflicts mirror Delhi's situation
- ③ **Kerala's fiscal model** — high social spending vs fiscal sustainability; Finance Commission's approach to fiscally stressed states
- ④ **Assam NRC** — completed NRC (2019) excluded ~19 lakh persons; CAA provides relief path for some; election politics around citizenship remains charged
- ⑤ **Anti-defection law** — post-election, if coalition partners switch — Tenth Schedule implications

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

ELECTION DATA:

Assam: 126 seats | Turnout: 85.70% | CM: Himanta Biswa Sarma (BJP)

Kerala: 140 seats | Turnout: 78.25% | LDF vs UDF | CM: Pinarayi Vijayan (CPM/LDF)

Puducherry: 30 seats | Turnout: 89.87% | Article 239A (UT with Legislature)

Results: May 4, 2026

CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENCES:

Article 170: Composition of State Legislative Assemblies

Article 239A: Union Territories with legislature (Puducherry, Delhi, J&K)

Article 239AA: Special provisions for Delhi (NCT) — broader than 239A

Article 324: ECI — superintendence of elections

Article 82: Delimitation after each Census

KERALA PATTERN:

LDF-UDF alternation: Every election 1980–2021 (broken by LDF in 2021)

2021: LDF won back-to-back for first time; CM Pinarayi Vijayan retained power

ECI STRUCTURE:

Chief Election Commissioner + 2 Election Commissioners

Removal: Same process as Supreme Court judge (CEC); EC removal by CEC recommendation

Amendment 2023: Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act — changed appointment process

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