



UPSC &amp; STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · UJIYARI.COM

**DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS**

# Kerala UDF Cabinet 2026 -- VD Satheesan's 20-Minister Council and Constitutional Framework

17 May 2026 · **POLITY**

CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator &amp; 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](http://bharatnotes.com) →**ADVERTISE****Advertise with Ujiyari**

Reach thousands of UPSC aspirants daily.

[epicbharat@gmail.com](mailto:epicbharat@gmail.com)

# Kerala UDF Cabinet 2026 -- VD Satheesan's 20-Minister Council and Constitutional Framework

17 May 2026 · 10 min read ·

1 tag ▾

## WHY IN NEWS:

CM-designate **VD Satheesan** submitted the list of **20 ministers** to Kerala Governor **Rajendra Arlekar** on the evening of **May 17, 2026**. The swearing-in ceremony is scheduled for **May 18, 2026 at 10 am** at **Central Stadium, Thiruvananthapuram**. The **United Democratic Front (UDF)**, led by the Indian National Congress, returns to power after the 2026 Kerala Assembly election, ending five years of Left Democratic Front (LDF) rule under Pinarayi Vijayan. The cabinet of 20 ministers plus the Chief Minister equals 21, precisely at the constitutional ceiling set by **Article 164(1A)**.

## CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK – COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (STATE)

### Article 163 – Council of Ministers to Aid and Advise Governor

*“There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Chief Minister at the head to aid and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions, except in so far as he is by or under this Constitution required to act in his discretion.”*

- The Governor is the **constitutional head** of the state; the Council of Ministers is the **real executive**
- The Governor **acts on the aid and advice** of the Council of Ministers in ordinary matters
- In matters where the Constitution vests **discretionary power** in the Governor (e.g., appointment of CM when no party has a clear majority, dismissal of a government that has lost majority), the Governor may act independently
- The **scope of gubernatorial discretion** has been consistently narrowed by Supreme Court judgements, most notably **Shamsher Singh v. State of Punjab (1974)** and **S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994)**

## Article 164 – Other Provisions as to Ministers

PROVISION	DETAIL
<b>164(1)</b>	Chief Minister shall be appointed by the Governor; other Ministers shall be appointed by the Governor <b>on the advice of the CM</b>
<b>164(1A)</b>	Total strength of the Council of Ministers, including the CM, <b>shall not exceed 15% of the total strength of the Legislative Assembly</b> (minimum: 12 Ministers)
<b>164(2)</b>	Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly
<b>164(3)</b>	Minister holds office during the pleasure of the Governor
<b>164(4)</b>	A person who is not a member of the Legislature may be appointed a Minister but must become a member <b>within six months</b>

### Article 164(1A) – The 15% Ceiling (91st Constitutional Amendment, 2003)

The **91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003** inserted Article 164(1A) to curb **cabinet expansion for political patronage**. The amendment was a direct response to the recommendations of the **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC)** chaired by Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah.

PARAMETER	KERALA CALCULATION
Total Assembly seats	<b>140</b>
15% of 140	<b>21</b>
Kerala's constitutional maximum	<b>21 ministers (including CM)</b>
VD Satheesan's cabinet	<b>20 ministers + CM = 21</b>
Headroom available	<b>Zero – at the ceiling</b>

The 91st Amendment simultaneously applied the same cap to the Union Council of Ministers under **Article 75(1A)** (maximum: 81 ministers for the 543-seat Lok Sabha).

## KERALA ASSEMBLY – KEY FACTS

FEATURE	DETAIL
Legislature type	<b>Unicameral</b> (only Legislative Assembly)
Total seats	<b>140 (elected)</b>
Current Assembly	<b>15th Kerala Legislative Assembly</b>
Tenure	5 years
2026 election result	UDF (Congress-led) won majority; LDF (CPM-led) lost
Speaker	<b>Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan</b>
Deputy Speaker	<b>Shanimol Usman</b> (woman)
Governor	<b>Rajendra Arlekar</b>
Outgoing CM	<b>Pinarayi Vijayan</b> (LDF, two terms: 2016–2021, 2021–2026)

## VD SATHEESAN – CHIEF MINISTER-DESIGNATE

FEATURE	DETAIL
Full name	<b>Vadasseri Damodaran Satheesan (VD Satheesan)</b>
Constituency	Paravur (Ernakulam district)
Party	Indian National Congress (INC)
Position	Leader of the Opposition in the 14th Kerala Assembly
Known for	Aggressive opposition leadership against Pinarayi Vijayan government; key role in UDF's 2026 victory
Political lineage	Loyalist of the Kerala Congress (INC) faction; close associate of senior UDF leaders

Satheesan served as **Leader of Opposition** in the outgoing Assembly – a role that gave him extensive experience scrutinising the LDF government's administrative decisions. He succeeds **Pinarayi Vijayan**, who completed two consecutive terms (a rare achievement in Kerala's alternating political cycle).

## CABINET COMPOSITION – KEY FEATURES

### Numerical Overview

CATEGORY	COUNT
Total ministers (including CM)	<b>21</b>
Ministers (excluding CM)	<b>20</b>
First-time ministers	<b>14</b>
Women ministers	<b>2</b>
SC (Scheduled Caste) ministers	<b>2</b>
IUML ministers	<b>5</b>

### Significance of 14 First-Time Ministers

The induction of **14 first-time ministers** (70% of the cabinet) signals a generational shift in UDF governance. It reflects:

- ❶ Congress’s intent to project a **new, reform-oriented face** distinct from the older UDF tenures
- ❷ Reward for constituency-level workers who delivered the election victory
- ❸ Infusion of fresh energy while retaining experienced hands in key portfolios

### SC Representation – A Contrast with LDF

One of the most noted features of the new cabinet is the inclusion of **2 SC ministers**. The **outgoing LDF cabinet in its second term (2021–2026)** had **zero SC ministers** – a gap widely criticised by Dalit organisations in Kerala, particularly in the context of the state’s otherwise high social development indicators.

### Women in Cabinet

With **2 women ministers** (one of whom is Deputy Speaker **Shanimol Usman**), the representation remains limited relative to Kerala’s record in social indicators (highest female literacy, lowest gender gap among Indian states). This is a recurring criticism of both UDF and LDF governments.

## IUML IN KERALA – COALITION DYNAMICS

The **Indian Union Muslim League (IUML)** is the second-largest constituent of the UDF and sends **5 ministers** to the Satheesan cabinet.

IUML MINISTER	REMARKS
<b>P K Kunhalikutty</b>	Senior IUML leader; served as Industries & IT Minister under CM A.K. Antony (2001–2004); multiple-term MP and MLA
<b>N Samsudheen</b>	IUML state leadership
<b>K M Shaji</b>	IUML MLA
<b>P K Basheer</b>	IUML MLA
<b>V E Abdul Gafoor</b>	IUML MLA

The IUML’s presence with 5 ministers reflects its **pivotal role** in UDF’s electoral arithmetic. Kerala’s Muslim population is approximately **26.6%** (Census 2011), concentrated in Malabar (northern Kerala). IUML consistently delivers seats in Malappuram, Kozhikode, and Thrissur districts.

### UDF Alliance Composition

PARTY	FULL NAME	IDEOLOGICAL POSITION
<b>INC</b>	Indian National Congress	Centre-left, secular nationalism
<b>IUML</b>	Indian Union Muslim League	Muslim minority interests, secular nationalism
<b>Kerala Congress (M)</b>	Kerala Congress (Mani faction)	Christian community interests, centrist
<b>RSP</b>	Revolutionary Socialist Party	Democratic socialism

### EXPERIENCED RETURNEES – RAMESH CHENNITHALA AND K MURALEEDHARAN

Two senior leaders bring **institutional experience** to the new cabinet:

**Ramesh Chennithala:** Former Home Minister and Leader of the Opposition during the first LDF term (2016–2021). Known for tenacious opposition politics; brings administrative and political management experience in law and order, home affairs.

**K Muraleedharan:** Son of late former PM **K Karunakaran** (legendary Congress leader in Kerala). Senior INC figure; brings continuity of Congress organisational experience.

Their inclusion balances the large cohort of first-time ministers and provides **institutional memory** in governance.

## ROLE OF GOVERNOR IN GOVERNMENT FORMATION

In Kerala's 2026 scenario, the Governor's role follows the standard constitutional convention:

STEP	CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS
Governor invites the leader of the majority party/coalition to form government	Article 164(1) – convention (no explicit rule for majority situation)
CM-designate submits cabinet list to Governor	Article 164(1) – Ministers appointed by Governor on CM's advice
Governor administers oath to CM and ministers	Article 164(3) + Third Schedule (oath of office)
Council of Ministers assumes office	Effective from oath-taking

The **Governor's discretion is minimal** when a party/coalition has a clear majority, as affirmed in **S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994)**. The Governor cannot delay oath administration or refuse to appoint the cabinet list submitted by the CM in a majority government scenario.

### Oath of Office and Secrecy

Under the **Third Schedule of the Constitution**, each minister must take:

- ❶ **Oath of office** – to faithfully discharge duties; uphold the Constitution; defend sovereignty and integrity of India
- ❷ **Oath of secrecy** – not to directly or indirectly communicate or reveal any matter brought under consideration or known as a minister

Both oaths are administered by the **Governor**.

## KERALA'S POLITICAL CYCLE – HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Kerala is notable for its **alternating power pattern** – voters have historically alternated between UDF and LDF every five years:

YEAR	WINNING ALLIANCE	CM
2001	UDF	A K Antony / Oommen Chandy
2006	LDF	V S Achuthanandan
2011	UDF	Oommen Chandy
2016	LDF	Pinarayi Vijayan
2021	LDF (exception – re-elected)	Pinarayi Vijayan
2026	UDF	VD Satheesan

Pinarayi Vijayan’s 2021 re-election was a **historic exception** – the first time in Kerala’s post-independence history that a sitting government was re-elected. The 2026 result resumes the alternating cycle.

## DOCTRINE OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

**Article 164(2)** enshrines the principle of **collective responsibility** of the Council of Ministers to the Legislative Assembly. Key implications:

- **Cabinet decisions are binding on all ministers** – a minister who disagrees must either accept the decision publicly or resign
- If the government loses a **vote of no-confidence** in the Assembly, the entire Council of Ministers must resign
- A **vote of no-confidence** against even a single minister, if it brings down the government, applies to all
- This doctrine prevents **ministerial dissent in public** – all disputes must be resolved internally in cabinet meetings

This is in contrast with **individual responsibility** (Article 164(4)) – where a minister can be dismissed by the Governor on the CM’s advice even if the cabinet retains majority.

## UPSC RELEVANCE

### GS Paper 2 – Polity and Governance

- **Article 164 and sub-articles:** Appointment of CM/ministers; 15% cap (Article 164(1A)); collective responsibility (164(2)); individual ministerial responsibility (164(4)); six-month rule (164(4))

- **91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003:** Rationale; simultaneous cap under Article 75(1A) for Union cabinet; anti-defection law strengthened in same amendment
- **Role of Governor:** Constitutional head vs. real executive; Governor's discretion under Article 163; S.R. Bommai case (1994); Shamsher Singh case (1974)
- **Coalition politics in India:** UDF vs. LDF in Kerala as a model of state-level coalition governance; role of IUML, Kerala Congress (M), RSP as coalition partners
- **Minority representation in governance:** SC ministers; women in cabinet; minority community (IUML) in power-sharing – constitutional guarantees vs. political practice
- **Collective responsibility doctrine:** Article 164(2); vote of no-confidence; compare with Article 75(3) at Union level
- **Collective responsibility vs. individual responsibility** – distinction; removal of individual minister on CM's advice

**Keywords:** Article 163, Article 164, Article 164(1A), 91st Constitutional Amendment 2003, Council of Ministers Kerala, VD Satheesan, Kerala UDF 2026, collective responsibility, Governor's role, IUML Kerala, S.R. Bommai case, coalition government, SC representation cabinet.

*Inserted by the **91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003**; the total number of Ministers including the CM in a State shall not exceed **15% of the total strength of the Legislative Assembly** (minimum 12).*

*Kerala has 140 seats; 15% = 21; Satheesan's cabinet of 20+CM = 21 is exactly at the ceiling.*

*Also inserted Article 75(1A) capping Union Council of Ministers at 15% of Lok Sabha strength (max 81 for 543 seats); strengthened anti-defection provisions – merger exemption requires at least **two-thirds** of original party strength.*

*Kerala is the only Indian state with a sustained alternating pattern between two alliances (UDF and LDF) for over four decades; Pinarayi Vijayan's 2021 re-election was the **sole exception** in this pattern.*

*Founded in **1948** after the partition of the All India Muslim League; the only Muslim League in independent India to remain consistently secular and part of mainstream coalition politics; headquartered in Kozhikode, Kerala; has always contested elections as part of UDF in Kerala.*

*9-judge SC bench; held that **floor of the Assembly is the only place to test majority**; Governor cannot recommend President's Rule without giving the government an opportunity to prove majority; federalism declared a **basic feature** of the Constitution; effectively curtailed arbitrary use of Article 356.*

*A fundamental principle of parliamentary democracy – the entire cabinet stands or falls together; if any minister's policy is repudiated by the Assembly through a vote, the whole cabinet must resign; there is no concept of a minister surviving while the PM/CM falls.*

[← NEWER ARTICLE](#)[India's "AI Miss" -- How Missing the Global AI Investment...](#)[OLDER ARTICLE →](#)[Adhik Maas 2026: The Intercalary Month That Keeps India's...](#)

## RELATED EDITORIALS

---

**BUSINESS STANDARD**[Census 2027 and the Delimitation Reckoning -- What the Numbers Will Trigger](#)

16 May

**THE HINDU**[The Bhojshala Verdict and the Unfinished Business of the Places of Worship Act](#)

16 May

**INDIAN EXPRESS**[Hate Speech and the Limits of Judicial Restraint -- Why Existing Laws Are Not Enough](#)

16 May

**INDIAN EXPRESS**[MTP Act and Reproductive Rights: When Gestational Limits Override Article 21](#)

15 May

## RELATED KEY TERMS

---

**KEY TERM**[42nd Amendment Freeze on Delimitation](#)

The constitutional freeze that locked Lok Sabha seat allocation to the...

**KEY TERM**[Advance Directive \(Living Will\)](#)

A legal document in which a competent adult specifies their medical...

**KEY TERM**[AFSPA \(Armed Forces Special Powers Act\)](#)

A central legislation granting special powers to armed forces...

**KEY TERM**[Anti-Conversion Laws](#)

State laws prohibiting religious conversions achieved through...



CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

## Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujiyari](#) →<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/05/17/kerala-udf-cabinet-satheesan-government-2026/>

### ALSO FROM THE CREATOR

## BharatNotes

Free UPSC study platform — subject-wise notes across all 4 GS papers, Prelims MCQs, Mains answer frameworks, PYQ analysis & progress tracking. **100% Free • No Login Required.**

[Start Preparing](http://bharatnotes.com) → [bharatnotes.com](http://bharatnotes.com)

### 📌 OPPORTUNITY

## Advertise with Ujiyari

Reach **thousands of serious UPSC & State PCS aspirants** daily through our PDFs, website, and social channels.

**Ideal for:** Coaching institutes • EdTech platforms • Book publishers • Exam prep apps

[✉ epicbharat@gmail.com](mailto:epicbharat@gmail.com)

Write to us for rates & media kit

Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs · [ujiyari.com](http://ujiyari.com) · [bharatnotes.com](http://bharatnotes.com)