



By: TA | AP Brief

Key Indian states hold elections as a test of support for PM Modi



Voters in India's Assam and Kerala states and the federally administered region of Puducherry began casting ballots Thursday in local elections seen as a test of support for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party.

The elections pit the BJP and its regional allies against a range of opposition parties.

Assam and Puducherry are governed by the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance, while Kerala is ruled by the opposition.

Two other opposition-ruled states, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, will vote later this month. The results for all five regions are expected May 4.

The polls come while the public is concerned about rising energy costs and tighter cooking gas supplies due to the **war in the Middle East**.

The outcome could show whether Modi's party can extend its dominance by making inroads into opposition strongholds.

A strong showing would also bolster his federal government, as the 2024 national election forced his ruling party to **rely on regional allies** to form the government.

The elections are also crucial for opposition parties seeking to build a sustained challenge to the BJP's dominance across the country.

In northeastern Assam, the BJP is seeking to retain power by emphasizing a hard line on immigration, a long-standing and contentious issue in the state bordering Bangladesh.

The state's campaign featured sharp rhetoric from the ruling BJP, which cast the election around claims of illegal immigration by Bengali-speaking Muslims.

Allegations of irregularities

Southern Kerala state presents a different challenge, where power has traditionally alternated between alliances led by the Indian

National Congress and communist parties.

Modi's party has struggled to gain ground in the state but has invested heavily to expand its presence.

In Puducherry, a small federal territory, the BJP is relying on coalition with a regional party to strengthen its position.

The most keenly watched and also the most contentious of the upcoming electoral contests is West Bengal, where the regional Trinamool Congress party has been in power for three consecutive terms.

Allegations of irregularities in the revision of electoral rolls have intensified political tensions

Modi's party has never governed West Bengal, and allegations of **irregularities** in the revision of electoral rolls have intensified political tensions.

Opposition parties say the exercise by election officials called the Special Intensive Revision has rendered millions of citizens unable to vote, particularly minority Muslims.

The Election Commission of India has denied the allegations, saying the exercise eliminated dead, duplicate and fake voters on the electoral roll.

Similar exercises have been done in several states.