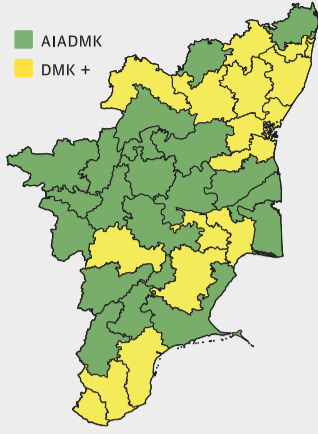


When T.N. last voted

If the 2016 Assembly election results were aggregated for Lok Sabha segments, the AIADMK would have led in 22 Lok Sabha segments and the DMK-led front would have led in 17. Map shows leads in Lok Sabha segments based on 2016 Assembly results. The vote share of the AIADMK in the last Assembly election was 40.85% and that of DMK led front was 39.27%

Compiled by Vignesh Radhakrishnan and Srinivasan Ramani



In 2016...

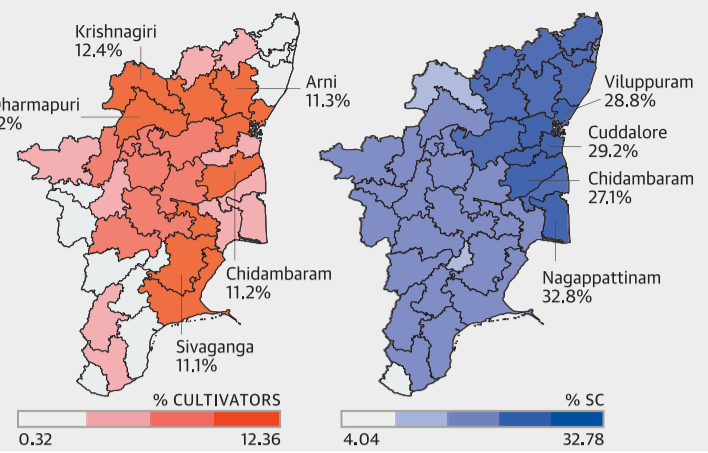
- AIADMK competed in a lion's share of seats with some smaller parties contesting on the 'two leaves' symbol
- DMK front consisted of the Congress, the Indian Union Muslim League, Puthiya Tamilagam (PT) and other smaller parties

In 2019...

- The AIADMK-led front comprises the DMK, BJP, PMK, PT and others
- The DMK-led front includes the Congress, VCK, CPI, CPI(M), MDMK and other smaller parties
- The Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam broke away from the AIADMK and is contesting in at least 24 seats

Demographic make-up

First map shows the constituency-wise share of cultivators in total population. Higher this share, greater the rural nature of the constituency. Second map shows the share of Scheduled Caste population, which is higher in the northern parts of the State



Source: Election Commission of India and data collated from Census 2011 by Gramener Inc.

[IN FOCUS: TAMIL NADU]

In a void left by Karunanidhi and Jayalalithaa

It is going to be an acid test for DMK's M.K. Stalin and AIADMK's Edappadi Palaniswami and O. Panneerselvam

T. RAMAKRISHNAN
CHENNAI

Having seen intense electoral battles between two strong personalities – M. Karunanidhi of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and M.G. Ramachandran and later Jayalalithaa of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) – for over 40 years, Tamil Nadu is going into a major election on April 18 for the first time without a towering figure.

This has triggered talk that the upcoming Lok Sabha poll may turn out to be a tame affair.

But, the situation does not appear to be so, as there will be byelection to 18 Assembly constituencies which will take place simultaneously. The outcome of the bypoll will decide the fate of the AIADMK government led by Edappadi K. Palaniswami. In the present strength of 214 members in the Assembly that has 21 vacant seats, the government is surviving by a margin of 17 members over the DMK-led front.

Naturally, the State's principal political forces, the DMK and the AIADMK, are leaving no stone unturned to come up trumps. After putting in considerable efforts, they have stitched up alliances of diverse parties and gone out of the way in accommodating their allies in allocation of seats.

Conscious that voters of the State do notice whether the major players have included the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in their alliances or not, the two Dravidian majors have ensured the inclusion of the national parties. This was in stark contrast

to the 2014 situation when the DMK and the AIADMK chose to ignore the national parties. But, then, Karunanidhi and Jayalalithaa were there at the helm of the two parties.

This time, the two parties are fielding their core members in an equal number of constituencies – 20, even though they are allowing a few of their allies to use symbols of their parties in some constituencies. And what has not gone unnoticed is that the current elections are going to be an acid test, both for the DMK's M.K. Stalin and AIADMK's Edappadi Palaniswami and O. Panneerselvam, as they are under pressure to prove their mettle. Should they put up a poor show, there is a possibility of a breakout of power struggle inside their organisations. However, for the common man, the elections present an opportunity to make his or her choice, depending upon a number of factors such as social, political, local and livelihood issues.

Caste equation

In the predominantly rural Harur Assembly seat (where a bypoll will be held) of the Dharmapuri parliamentary constituency in the western region where there has been a history of tense equations between the intermediary Vanniya and Scheduled Castes, caste appears to hold sway. Scars left behind by the organised violence against the SCs in a few villages in November 2012, falling under the neighbouring Pappireddipatti Assembly segment, are yet to heal. Interestingly, Pappireddipatti too is facing a bypoll.



Making a mark: A trader displaying a collection of pens with photos of political leaders in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. * J. MANOHARAN

If the alliance between the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) and the AIADMK factors in their cadre base, it may also mean losing out on the AIADMK's significant Dalit voter base, given the perception among sections of the Dalits in Harur that the PMK represents essentially the interests of the Vanniya. This election, the average AIADMK Dalit voter may shift his loyalty.

Cuddalore is another area where the ruling party's alliance with the PMK plus the BJP has disturbed many a section. Needless to say, that is not the only issue. Sections of voters in this district, known for an intricate demographic mosaic of Vanniya, Dalits, fishermen and minorities, have a long list of grievances against the AIADMK regime over a range of issues.

K. Vallathan, a fisherman of Devanampattinam, one of the largest coastal hamlets in the State, recalls with a sense of hurt that at the time of the Gaja cyclone in November last year, "no one from the ruling dispensation even bothered to visit us. The community is only used as a vote bank and the

political leaders forget us after the election." To make matters worse for the AIADMK, there are signs of lack of cohesion within the party.

Caste alone does not decide everything in the Thanjavur parliamentary constituency, known as the rice bowl of Tamil Nadu. Mukkulathors or Thevars, a social coalition of three sub-castes – Kallars, Maravars and Agamudiyars, constitute the major section of society. Yet, "it all depends on the contesting candidates," says Palani of Peravurani in Thanjavur. The Maravars and the Agamudiyars live in equal numbers and are known for their allegiance to the two different Dravidian parties. But when it comes to elections, individual profile of the candidate becomes the governing factor.

V.R. Muthu Peyandi, a marginal farmer from Pullaner village in the Madurai constituency of southern Tamil Nadu, captures the mood of agriculturists in his village. Shortage of money circulation since demonetisation and the introduction of a ₹6,000-a-year scheme in lieu of durable

efforts to increase the income of farmers have caused him dissatisfaction against the Centre. Yet, "we are yet to decide whether we need a change," Muthu Peyandi says.

Dhinakaran

About 150 km further south lies Tirunelveli, where the factor of the AIADMK's rebel and Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK)'s founder, T.T.V. Dhinakaran, has become all pervasive. Almost every youth from the Mukkolathor community seems to be a vociferous Dhinakaran supporter.



According to the youth, the rebel alone can provide the "much-needed political space" to their community.

The situation is perceptibly different in the western region's Coimbatore, once famous as the centre of textiles in southern India, where people are more concerned about economic aspects than others. Infrastructure development, closure of power loom units, unemployment, the apparently sagging economy and the efficacy of Ayushman Bharat, a health insurance scheme of the Central government, are among the issues that are bothering the people there with no clear tilt, as yet, in favour or against any major political formation.

Having achieved stunning success in the only byelection (R.K. Nagar Assembly consti-

tency in December 2017) held in the State since Jayalalithaa's death in December 2016, Mr. Dhinakaran, as a third force, is widely expected to cut into AIADMK votes across constituencies. But, he does not seem to be content with that. He has begun assiduously wooing Muslims, who account for 5.86% of the State's population and have been favouring the DMK generally. He has allotted the Central Chennai Lok Sabha seat to the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI). Though the DMK has also not named any Muslim nominee, its ally, the Indian Union Muslim League, will put up one in Ramanathapuram. As of now, there is no Muslim contestant from the AIADMK-led front.

The presence of the nascent Makkal Needhi Maiam, a party floated by veteran film actor Kamal Hassan, may also upset the calculations of the principal players in some constituencies.

Given the poll arithmetic and the Dhinakaran factor, the DMK-led front appears to be enjoying an edge over the AIADMK's "mega alliance." But, one should also not forget that Tamil Nadu, known for giving decisive verdicts, has sprung a surprise even on seasoned pollsters on more than one occasion in the past 20 years.

(With additional inputs from S. Prasad in Cuddalore, M. Soundarya Preetha and Karthik Madhavan in Coimbatore, P.V. Sridvidya in Harur, Pon Vasanth B.A. in Madurai, V. Venkatasubramanian in Thanjavur and P. Sudhakar in Tirunelveli)

POLL POURRI

Mamata's mantra challenge



KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday targeted the BJP's top two, claiming she is more into religion than Prime Minister Narendra Modi or party president Amit Shah. Speaking at a programme of the Marwari community in Kolkata, Ms. Banerjee said she can recite religious mantras better than the two leaders. "Worshipping does not mean only putting a tilak on the forehead. You must understand the meaning of the mantras. I challenge Modi-Shah to compete with me in chanting mantras," she said. The Trinamool Congress chief accused the ruling party at the Centre of "bringing back" the Ayodhya issue because of elections. "They only engage in political rhetoric over Ram Mandir before elections. We have renovated and redeveloped temples at Tarapith, Tarakeshwar, Dakshineswar," she said, adding her party does not believe in "religion of hatred".

'Blessings' beget FIR for Jayant

RANCHI

An FIR was registered against Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha for allegedly violating the model code of conduct while addressing students at the convocation ceremony of a management institute here, police said on Tuesday. Mr. Sinha is a BJP MP from Hazaribagh constituency in Jharkhand. "As per the direction by the district administration, the FIR was filed against Jayant Sinha yesterday (Monday) under Section 188 (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the IPC and under Section 123 of the Representation of the People Act at the Khelgaon police station in Ranchi," a police officer said. Addressing the students at IIM-Ranchi on Saturday, the Minister had allegedly sought their "blessings" for another five years, the officer said. PTI

M.P. Cong. dials Salman Khan

BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh Congress has requested Bollywood megastar Salman Khan to breach the BJP's Indore citadel in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. The actor was born in Indore's Palasia area in 1965 and has spent a substantial part of his childhood in that city before moving to Mumbai. "Our leaders have already talked to Salman Khan to campaign for us in Indore. We are sure the actor would campaign for us," MP Congress spokesperson Pankaj Chaturvedi said. Indore has been in the iron grip of the BJP ever since current Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan defeated former CM and senior Congressman Prakash Chandra Sethi in 1989. Eight-time MP Mahajan has retained the seat since then and the BJP has also had a sizeable share of victories in the district's eight Assembly constituencies. PTI

Andhra political families carve up Kadapa, Chittoor

Kin of established politicians in fray more than ever before

A.D. RANGARAJAN
TIRUPATI

Political families in Andhra Pradesh have established themselves not just in constituencies but over entire districts. For the elections next month, Chittoor and Kadapa districts will see more relatives of established politicians in the fray than ever before.

In Chittoor district, the major share has gone to the Peddireddy family, with YSR Congress Party strongman P. Ramachandra Reddy, a former Minister, contesting again from Punganur and his son P.V. Midhun Reddy from the Rajampet Lok Sabha seat. A new entrant this time is Mr. Peddireddy's younger brother Dwarakanath Reddy, who is testing his fortune from the Thamballapalle Assembly segment also as a YSRCP candidate.

In neighbouring Piler constituency, Nallari Kishore Kumar Reddy, younger brother of former Chief Minister N. Kirankumar Reddy, is trying his luck as the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) candidate.

Legacy seats

Following the death of veteran Gali Muddukrishnama Naidu, the TDP had given an MLC ticket to his widow Gali Saraswathamma and now the Nagari Assembly ticket to his son Gali Bhanuprakash. In Srikalahasti, son of ailing veteran Bojjala Gopalakrishna Reddy, B. Sudheer



Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is contesting from Pulivendula, his maternal uncle from Kamalapuram and cousin from Kadapa.

Reddy has got the party nod. Unveiling a new trend in dynastic politics, the TDP has gone beyond district borders to accommodate kin. Party supremo N. Chandrababu Naidu, who is contesting from Kuppam, gave his son Nara Lokesh the Mangalagiri ticket in Guntur district. Similarly, TDP politburo member and former Chandragiri MLA Galla Aruna, who is not contesting, wrangled the Guntur Lok Sabha seat for her son Galla Jayadev once again.

Taking on the Peddireddy strongman in Punganur is TDP's N. Anusha Reddy, sister-in-law of Minister N. Amarnatha Reddy. He is contesting in adjoining Palamaner.

YS fiefdom

The YS family has effectively carved up Kadapa district. YSRCP president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is contesting from Pulivendula, his maternal uncle P. Ravindranath Reddy from Kamalapuram

and cousin Y.S. Avinash Reddy is the candidate for the Kadapa Lok Sabha seat. Jammalamadugu Assembly candidate M. Sudheer Reddy is the nephew of veteran politician M.V. Mysooru Reddy.

Rayachoty candidate Gadikota Srikanth Reddy is the son of former legislator G. Mohan Reddy.

Things are no different in the rival TDP camp. Mydukur candidate Putta Sudhakar Yadav is a close relative of politburo member Yanamala Ramakrushnu. Jammalamadugu candidate P. Ramasubba Reddy is the nephew of former Minister P. Siva Reddy and Rayachoty candidate R. Ramesh Kumar Reddy is the son of R. Rajagopal Reddy, ex-Minister in the NTR cabinet and brother of district TDP President R. Srinivasa Reddy.

Narasimha Prasad, who has bagged the TDP Railway Kodur (SC) ticket, is the son-in-law of Chittoor Lok Sabha candidate N. Sivaprasad.

INTERVIEW | HEMANT SOREN

'Politics on corpses won't win votes'

BJP can neither run the country nor the State, says JMM leader

NISTULA HEBBAR

Former Jharkhand Chief Minister and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Hemant Soren underlines widespread concerns in the State over the Forest Rights Act and says the Pulwama incident is unlikely to trump issues of unemployment and agrarian distress in the elections.

You met with Rahul Gandhi on Saturday and announced that most issues in the alliance have been ironed out. So why not announce it now and not after Holi?

Our idea is to include the Left parties, some of whom are the oldest in the State and have been involved in political activity. That is being considered, but all other issues have been settled. We feel that the announcement will have a better effect from Ranchi in the presence of "Guruji" (former Chief Minister Shibu Soren). Which is why it will be announced in his presence in the next few days.

What are the issues that you will focus on in these elections?

The land acquisition in the State is a big issue as is the Forest Rights Act and the recent developments in the Supreme Court. Tribals are the most affected by this development. Nearly one crore people are affected by the FRA in Jharkhand alone. Despite the stay in the Supreme Court, there are apprehensions of a big conspiracy to displace tribals from the 11 wildlife sanctuaries. This is a strange model of development which is not good for people. Over and above that we are go-



ing to flag the issue of unemployment, which is huge across the country.

Do you think the Pulwama attack and its aftermath have blunted the edge of the Opposition's campaign on policy issues?

I want to ask Prime Minister Modi: when there is an Army for the protection of the country, why are you going there with a puffed chest? They (the Army) are quite able to defend our borders, but what about your policy-making role? Farmers are committing suicide, the youth are unemployed in huge numbers. Why can't Mr. Modi answer those questions?

Politics on corpses will not win you votes. I can tell you 200% that the BJP can neither run the country nor the State. In Pulwama people died in a suicide attack by a terrorist, all those jawans hail from a rural-agricultural background from across the country. Within the country, farmers are dying of hunger and at the border farmers' sons are being killed because of mismanagement.

There are 1.25 billion people in the country, and they understand what is happening. Let those whose work it is, do it. You do your job. War is not your only job. The BJP wants to keep

this kind of temperature up, because in a calm, harmonious environment they are unable to bake their political bread. It is a sponsored halla (hollering) party. Even the "Modi, Modi" halla in public meetings is done by people planted by the RSS in the crowd. But, now, people are also aware of these tactics.

Do you think alliances by the Opposition can really take on the NDA?

I can't tell you about the situation nationally, but in Jharkhand we will definitely challenge the BJP both in Lok Sabha and in Jharkhand Assembly polls (scheduled for later in the year).

There are always questions raised about the leadership of the alliance. Do you think it should be Congress president Rahul Gandhi?

This is first of all an issue for the Congress. Let them first decide who they want. We will go with their decision. Now that Priyankaji is also in active politics, only time will tell what situation comes about.

What has been the Congress's attitude towards seat sharing after it won the Kolebira bypoll? Have they displayed more arrogance or are bargaining harder than before the win?

You people decide whether it is arrogance or hard bargaining. For us politicians, it's a normal issue. Having said that, we (JMM) have won more elections, in contests where even Prime Minister Modi had to come down to Jharkhand to campaign. All that has been taken into account too.

Taking on Modi and Rahul

THRISSUR

There could be times when you need to bite more than what you can chew. For, it is the bite that matters. U.S. Aashin, national election coordinator of the Indian Gandhian Party, headquartered in Kerala's Thrissur district, is planning to take on two prime ministerial candidates in the Lok Sabha election – Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi. Ever since its launch in 2011, the IGP, whose motto is 'to develop India through entrepreneurship,' has been contesting in panchayat and Lok Sabha elections. "The IGP fielded candidates in three Lok Sabha constituencies in the previous elections and supported many Independents," says Mr. Aashin. "This time, we are going to contest from all 543 constituencies." IGP's social media campaign has received 5,000 applications from prospective candidates. The party would release the list on March 23.

Trending: Missing Voters app

NEW DELHI

Launched just a couple of months ago for helping eligible persons get into the electoral rolls, the mobile application, Missing Voters, is now trending in the play store, with more than 32,000 downloads in

the past few days. The application has been launched by Khalid Saifullah, CEO of Hyderabad-based RayLabs Technologies. Talking to The Hindu on phone, he said the motivation for creating the app was to ensure that all eligible citizens got the right to vote.

How will Nitish [Kumar] and [Narendra] Modi face the people in 2019? They have not fulfilled even one promise made in 2014, and have only duped the youth, farmers, poor and jawans

TEJASHWI YADAV
RJD LEADER

