

## **Indian Election Results 2024: Mamata Beats Modi in West Bengal**

Ronojoy Sen



### **Summary**

*The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had targeted West Bengal as one of the states where it would do better in the 2024 general elections compared to 2019 and possibly compensate for losses in the Hindi belt. The results, however, were a blow to the BJP which dropped to 12 seats from 18 in 2019 and the Trinamool Congress went up from 22 to 29 seats.*

During the election campaign for the 2024 general elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had identified West Bengal as one state where it could increase its seat share. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had even declared that the BJP would get its [“most success” in West Bengal](#). Indian Home Minister Amit Shah had also asserted that the BJP would win [between 24 and 30 of the 42 seats](#) on offer in the state. However, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) had won 29 seats in the general elections, up by seven from 2019, compared to the BJP’s 12 seats, which were down by six. The Congress won one seat while the Left parties drew a blank.

The results were very different from what the exit polls had forecast, with one [predicting between 26 and 31 seats for the BJP](#) and between 11 and 14 for the TMC. The results were also divergent from the close contest that most pre-poll surveys had predicted.

The TMC largely retained the seats that it had won in 2019, but it also made inroads into areas where the BJP had won earlier. This was reflected in the rise of TMC’s vote share from 43 per cent to 46 per cent and a marginal fall in the BJP’s vote share though the latter cemented its place as the principal opposition party. In north Bengal, where the BJP had seven of its eight Lok Sabha seats in 2019, the TMC won Cooch Behar by defeating Union minister Nisith Pramanik. Another seat in the region, Maldaha Dakshin, was retained by the Congress. In the Jangalmahal region, where the BJP had won four seats in 2019, the party suffered a jolt. This time, the BJP was able to retain only two of the seats in Jangalmahal-Bishnupur and Purulia. In south Bengal, the BJP retained the Bangaon and Ranaghat seats, where the Matua community is present in large numbers, but lost high-profile seats in places such as Medinipur, Hooghly and Bardhaman-Durgapur. The only additional seats it won in this region were Kathi and Tamluk, both of which are considered the stronghold of former TMC leader and BJP’s local face of the campaign, Suwendu Adhikari. In Kathi, Suwendu’s brother, Soumendu, won, while in Tamluk, the controversial retired judge, Abhijit Gangopadhyay, obtained victory.

What were the reasons behind the TMC significantly increasing its seat share and the BJP’s steep decline? A few factors can be identified. First, though Modi was seen as the BJP’s trump card that might have paradoxically been the party’s Achilles heel. By some estimates, Modi visited the state over 20 times during the campaign period, possibly the most for any

state. The repeated visits and the BJP's seeking of votes in his name meant that the local party organisation largely played second fiddle. As it happened in many parts of India, [Modi's charisma failed to attract voters](#) in West Bengal in the manner it had done in the 2019 elections.

Modi's efforts to bring national issues to the fore also seemed to have failed to connect with the voters. In contrast, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's campaign was built around local issues and the welfare programmes that the state government had put in place. In particular, Mamata's welfare benefits for women, such as *Lakshmir Bhandar*, continued to resonate among women voters. The scheme provides eligible women with monthly financial assistance. The [CSDS-Lokniti post-poll survey](#) found that in 2024, there was an 11 per cent increase from 2019 in the TMC's vote share among women.

Second, making Suwendu Adhikari the face of the local campaign backfired on the BJP. This made it difficult for the BJP to distinguish itself from the TMC, particularly on issues such as corruption and violence, since Adhikari himself has corruption allegations against his name and has a strongman image. The elevation of Adhikari in the BJP's ranks created internal discontent too. Adhikari was responsible for side-lining long-time party members like former BJP state president, Dilip Ghosh, who was moved from Medinipur constituency he had won in 2019 to Bardhaman-Durgapur where he lost to TMC's Kirti Azad by over 100,000 votes. The nomination of Ghosh in Bardhaman-Durgapur was part of a series of miscalculations by the BJP where either Adhikari's preferred candidates or relatively unknown nominees were given tickets.

Third, issues like the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) did not get the traction among Hindu voters that the BJP had expected. The TMC's opposition to the CAA, along with Modi's divisive campaign, consolidated the Muslim vote in favour of the TMC – [73 per cent of whom voted for the TMC](#) – but the Hindu vote did not similarly consolidate behind the BJP.

Finally, some local issues like the violence, allegedly perpetrated by TMC leaders against women in Sandeshkhali in south Bengal, was played up by the BJP in their campaign. However, it also did not prove to be a big vote-getter for the BJP. Indeed, in the Basirhat constituency, where Sandeshkhali is located, the TMC's Nurul Islam beat the BJP's Rekha Patra, who was one of the victims in Sandeshkhali, by a margin of over 300,000 votes.

The Lok Sabha results will provide a fillip to Mamata in her bid to retain the state in the Assembly elections in 2026. The BJP, on its part, will have to go back to the drawing board and focus on building its organisation in the state rather than banking only on Modi.

.....

Dr Ronjoy 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. 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.