

# Local Body Elections in India, January-March 2026: A State-wise Analysis of Notification, Schedule and Political Context

## Introduction

Local self-government institutions form the foundational tier of India’s federal democratic structure, enshrined through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of 1992. These amendments mandated the devolution of power to panchayats and urban local bodies (ULBs), creating a third tier of governance that directly addresses the civic needs of India’s population. Elections to these bodies are overseen by independent State Election Commissions (SECs) in each state, constituted under Articles 243-K and 243-ZA of the Constitution of India.

The early months of 2026 have witnessed a notable clus-

ter of local body election activity across five states — Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Telangana — with formal notifications issued between January 27 and February 23, 2026 as depicted in Table 1. These elections range from general elections to full municipal bodies, to indirect elections for mayoral posts, to bye-elections for vacant panchayat wards. Together, they reflect the continuous democratic pulse of India’s urban and rural governance machinery.

This research note provides a state-wise overview of these elections, drawing on official SEC notifications, media reports and secondary data, with a view to offering a contextual analysis relevant to scholars of local governance, electoral studies and federal politics in India. A Summary is mentioned in Table 1.

**Table 1: Local Body Election Notifications (Jan–Feb 2026)**

State	Type of Body	Notification Date	Key Details
Andhra Pradesh	Municipal Corporation (Indirect)	16 Feb 2026	Election of Mayor (Nellore) & Deputy Mayor (Eluru)
Goa	Corporation of City of Panaji (General)	16 Feb 2026	Polling: 11 Mar 2026; Counting: 13 Mar 2026
Goa	Village Panchayat Bye-Election (14 wards)	11 Feb 2026	Bye-elections to 14 vacant wards
Jharkhand	Municipal (General) – 48 ULBs	23 Feb 2026	9 Corps, 20 Councils, 19 Panchayats; ~43.33 lakh voters
Maharashtra	Local Body (Multiple Corporations)	11 Feb 2026	BMC & 28 other civic bodies; Polling: 15 Jan 2026
Telangana	Municipality & Municipal Corporation	27 Jan 2026	116 municipalities + 7 corps; Polling: 11 Feb 2026

## Andhra Pradesh

**Background:** Andhra Pradesh, bifurcated from the erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh in 2014, has a network of 13 municipal corporations and numerous municipalities administered by the Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration (CDMA). The Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission (APSEC), constituted on 17 June 1994, oversees local body elections in the state. Following the last round of urban local body elections conducted in 2021, several indirect elections — particularly for the posts of mayors and deputy mayors — have been conducted periodically as vacancies arise.

**2026 Notification:** On 16 February 2026, the APSEC issued notification for indirect elections to fill the posts of Mayor of Nellore Municipal Corporation and Deputy Mayor of Eluru Municipal Corporation. These are indirect elections, meaning they are conducted among elected ward councillors rather than through direct public voting.

Nellore Municipal Corporation, established in 2004, spans 149.2 sq. km and serves a population of approximately 6 lakh (2011 census). It comprises 54 election wards across 2 zones. Eluru Municipal Corporation, headquartered in Eluru, is one of the newer corporations in the state. The political context for these elections is important: the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which returned to power in the 2024 Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections under Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, has been consolidating its position in urban local bodies. In the February 2025 round of similar indirect elections, TDP-backed candidates won deputy mayor posts in both Nellore and Eluru.

**Significance:** These elections, while indirect and limited in scope, are constitutionally significant as they complete the representative chain of urban governance. They signal TDP’s ongoing effort to install party loyalists at the helm of key municipal corporations, strengthening its administrative presence ahead of future direct elections.

## Goa

**Background:** Goa, India's smallest state by area, has a unique local governance structure comprising Village Panchayats, Zilla Panchayats, Municipal Councils and the Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP). The Goa State Election Commission (GSEC) administers elections to all these bodies under the Goa Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 and related rules. Panaji, the state capital, is governed by the CCP — the sole municipal corporation in Goa.

**2026 Notifications:** The GSEC issued two separate notifications in February 2026. On 11 February, a bye-election notification was issued for 14 vacant wards across various Village Panchayats in the state. On 16 February, the Commission formally notified the General Election to the Corporation of the City of Panaji 2026.

For the CCP election, GSEC Commissioner Menino D'Souza announced the delimitation of CCP wards on 12 February 2026, with the Additional Collector (North) appointed as Election Commissioner for the polls. A total of 48 polling booths were set up for the elections. The maximum permissible election expenditure per candidate was fixed at ₹2.5 lakh. Voting was conducted through ballot papers. The nomination process ran from 17 to 24 February 2026, with polling scheduled on 11 March 2026 and counting on 13 March 2026.

**Significance:** The CCP election is a politically watched event as Panaji is both the state capital and the constituency of Chief Minister Pramod Sawant (BJP). Control of the Corporation has implications for urban development policy and civic service delivery in the capital. The simultaneous bye-elections to 14 panchayat wards reflect the routine democratic maintenance of Goa's rural governance structures.

## Jharkhand

**Background:** Jharkhand, carved out of Bihar in November 2000, has a relatively young tradition of local self-governance. Urban local body elections in the state have historically faced delays, often due to litigation around reservation policies and ward delimitation. Following the re-election of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-led Hemant Soren government in late 2024, urban local body elections were prioritised, partly in response to High Court directions to complete the election process by 31 March 2026.

**2026 Notification:** The Jharkhand State Election Commission issued the election notification on 23 February 2026, announcing general elections to 48 urban local bodies — comprising 9 municipal corporations, 20 municipal councils (Nagar Parishads) and 19 town councils (Nagar Panchayats). State Election Commissioner Alka Tiwari announced that

voting would take place on 22 February 2026 (subsequently confirmed as 23 February 2026), with counting of votes on 27 February 2026.

Approximately 43.33 lakh citizens were enrolled as eligible voters across the 48 urban local bodies. Around 1,087 wards were covered, with direct elections held for ward councillors and for the posts of mayors and chairpersons. The post of deputy mayor and vice-president was designated as unreserved and to be elected indirectly. A total of 4,304 polling stations were set up across 2,129 buildings. The State Election Commission directed all District Election Officers to ensure basic minimum facilities at every polling station — including drinking water, toilets, ramps for disabled voters and lighting.

**Significance:** These elections represent the first comprehensive urban local body election in Jharkhand in several years and are a crucial test of the JMM government's popularity at the grassroots level. The completion of elections ahead of the High Court-mandated deadline of 31 March 2026 demonstrates the commission's institutional resolve. The choice of ballot papers over EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines) was notable, reflecting the state's logistical and resource considerations.

## Maharashtra

**Background:** Maharashtra has one of the most complex and politically significant urban local governance frameworks in India, with 29 municipal corporations including the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) — one of the wealthiest civic bodies in Asia. The Maharashtra State Election Commission (MSEC), a constitutional authority established under Article 243-K, administers elections to all panchayati raj institutions and urban local bodies in the state.

**2026 Notification:** The MSEC issued its notification for local body elections on 11 February 2026, covering 29 municipal corporations. Crucially, the BMC election, long delayed since its previous term ended, was held on 15 January 2026 with results declared on 16 January 2026. The Maharashtra government implemented a four-member ward system for most municipal corporations in the state (with the exception of BMC), a structural change that sparked political debate.

As depicted in Table 2 the BMC election result was politically consequential: the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance secured 118 corporators, crossing the halfway mark of 114. The BJP alone won 89 seats, emerging as the single largest party. Ritu Tawde (BJP) was elected as the Mayor of Mumbai — the first BJP Mayor of Mumbai in over four decades — following the Mahayuti alliance's landslide in the November 2024 Maharashtra assembly elections. The Mumbai mayoral election was held on 11 February 2026. Deputy Mayor Sanjay Shankar Ghadi of Shiv Sena (Shinde faction) was chosen for a rotating term of 15 months. A detail results by municipal corporation is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Seats won by major political parties in the municipal corporation general election 2025-26 in Maharashtra**

Municipal Corporation	No of Wards	Total Seats	No of Contesting Candidates	Number of Seats Won by Political Parties						Others
				BJP	SS	INC	NCP	SS - UBT	NCP-SP	
Brihanmumbai	227	227	1700	89	29	24	3	65	1	16
Pune	41	165	1155	119	0	15	27	1	3	0
Nagpur	38	151	993	102	1	34	1	2	0	11
Thane	33	131	648	28	75	0	9	1	12	6
Pimpri-Chinchwad	32	128	691	84	6	0	37	0	0	1
Kalyan-Dombivali	31	122	488	50	53	2	0	11	1	5
Nashik	31	122	735	72	26	3	4	15	0	2
Vasai-Virar	29	115	547	43	1	1	0	0	0	70
Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar	29	115	859	57	13	1	0	6	1	37
Navi Mumbai	28	111	500	65	42	0	0	2	0	2
Solapur	26	102	564	87	4	2	1	0	0	8
Mira-Bhayandar	24	95	434	78	3	13	0	0	0	1
Bhivandi-Nizampur	23	90	438	22	12	30			12	14
Amravati	22	87	661	25	3	15	11	2	0	31
Malegaon	21	84	300	2	18	3	0	0	0	61
Kolhapur	20	81	327	26	15	34	4	1	0	1
Nanded-Waghala	20	81	491	45	4	10	2	0	0	20
Akola	20	80	469	38	1	21	1	6	3	10
Ulhasnagar	20	78	432	37	36	1	0	0	0	4
Panvel	20	78	246	55	2	4	2	5	0	10
Sangli-Miraj-Kupwad	20	78	381	39	2	18	16		3	0
Jalgaon	19	75	333	46	22	0	1	5	0	1
Dhule	19	74	320	50	5	0	8	0	0	11
Latur	18	70	359	22		43	1			4
Ahilyanagar	17	68	283	25	10	2	27	1		3
Chandrapur	17	66	451	23	1	27	0	6	0	9
Parbhani	16	65	411	12	0	12	11	25	0	5
Ichalkaranji	16	65	230	43	3	0	1	1	0	17
Jalna	16	65	454	41	12	9	0	0	0	3
Grand Total	893	2869	15900	1425	399	324	167	155	36	363

Sources: State Election Commission, Maharashtra.

**Significance:** The BMC election result marked the end of Shiv Sena (UBT)’s 25-year dominance over Mumbai’s civic administration. For the Mahayuti government under Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, it represents not just a political victory but control over BMC’s massive annual budget — historically one of the largest of any city corporation in India. The broader round of municipal elections across Maharashtra tests whether the Mahayuti’s 2024 assembly mandate translates into local governance dominance across smaller cities.

## Telangana

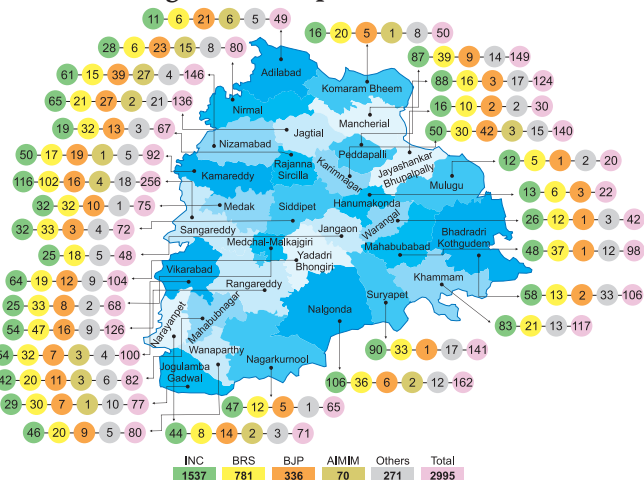
**Background:** Telangana, formed as India’s 29th state in June 2014, conducts urban local body elections through the Telangana State Election Commission (TSEC). The last round of urban local body elections was held in 2020–21. Following the Congress party’s victory in the November 2023 Telangana assembly elections, defeating the incumbent Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) after a decade in power, the 2026 municipal elections carried substantial political weight as a mid-term barometer.

**2026 Notification:** The Telangana State Election Commission announced the election schedule on 27 January 2026, notifying the 2nd Ordinary Elections to municipalities and municipal corporations. Elections were held across 116 municipalities (2,582 wards) and 7 municipal corporations (414 wards) — covering 123 urban local bodies in all. Three municipal corporations (Greater Hyderabad, Greater Warangal and Khammam) and 6 municipalities were excluded from this phase.

Polling took place on 11 February 2026, with counting on 13 February 2026. A total of 52.17 lakh voters were enrolled, of whom 38.09 lakh (73.01%) exercised their franchise — a voter turnout that officials described as impressive, particularly given that elections were conducted on party lines. Among municipalities, Choutuppal in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district recorded the highest turnout of 91.91%, while Nandikonda in Nalgonda district registered the lowest at 59.66%. Among the seven corporations, Nalgonda posted the highest turnout at 77.36% and Nizamabad the lowest at 59.12%. A total of 16,301 ballot boxes were deployed across 8,207 polling stations.

**Results:** Map 1 depicts that the ruling Congress emerged as the clear winner, securing victory in 66 municipalities out of 116, with a total ward tally of 1,347 seats. BRS won 13 municipalities (717 wards), BJP secured 261 wards and others won 256 wards. Thirty-six municipalities recorded hung results. In the seven municipal corporations, Congress won decisive majorities in Ramagundam, Mancherial, Nalgonda and Mahabubnagar, while BJP was the strongest party in Karimnagar. Elected ward members were administered the oath of office on 16 February 2026. District wise ward won by major parties is illustrated in Map 1 (below).

**Map 1: District-wise number of wards won by major parties in Telangana municipal elections 2026**



**Significance:** The results affirmed Congress’s political consolidation in Telangana, extending its December 2024 gram panchayat success into the urban domain. For the BRS, the outcome underlined that its post-assembly-election decline has not been reversed. BJP, though it captured Karimnagar corporation, did not significantly expand its urban footprint. Political analysts noted that the Congress benefited from the structural advantage of the ruling party in local body elections, combined with the perceived absence of strong anti-incumbency.

## Concluding Observations

The cluster of local body elections across five states in January–February 2026 reflects several broader tendencies in India’s democratic landscape.

**First,** ruling parties at the state level consistently demonstrated electoral advantage in local body polls — a pattern visible in Telangana (Congress), Maharashtra (BJP/Mahayuti) and likely in Andhra Pradesh (TDP). This underlines the structural influence of state administrations over local electoral outcomes.

**Second,** the continued use of ballot papers rather than EVMs in states such as Jharkhand and Telangana highlights resource constraints and logistical considerations at the sub-state level that federal policy has not yet fully resolved.

**Third,** judicial oversight, visible in Jharkhand through High Court-mandated election timelines, has emerged as an important mechanism for ensuring that elected local bodies are not indefinitely superseded by administrator rule — a trend with significant implications for constitutional governance.

**Fourth,** Goa’s dual notification — covering both urban corporation elections and rural panchayat bye-elections simultaneously — demonstrates effective institutional coordination between urban and rural local governance calendars, a model worth studying.

Together, these elections represent a live and ongoing process of democratic renewal at the grassroots, reaffirming India’s commitment to the constitutional vision of vibrant local self-governance.

Sources: State Election Commission notifications (AP, Goa, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Telangana); The Hindu; Deccan Chronicle; The Wire; India TV News; O Heraldo (Goa); Official district portals of Jharkhand Government.