

Modi's party is set to take control of West Bengal in key election

AP New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist party is poised to wrest control of the state of West Bengal, an opposition stronghold, in a key local election.

The Election Commission of India released partial results showing the Bharatiya Janata Party ahead in at least 190 seats in the 294-member West Bengal state legislature. Final results are expected Monday evening.

It would be a significant breakthrough for Modi's party, which had tried for years to dislodge the All India Trinamool Congress government led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The BJP has never governed West Bengal, a politically influential



Bharatiya Janata Party supporters celebrate after taking a lead during vote counting for the West Bengal Legislative Assembly elections, near the party head office in Kolkata on Monday.
AFP

state, where Banerjee — one of Modi's most prominent critics — has held power since 2011.

Opposition parties have sharply criticized the polls in West Bengal after the election commission removed millions of voters from electoral rolls.

Three other states are also taking part in the latest election.

The South Asian country of

more than 1.4 billion people has 28 states and eight federal territories. Staggered state elections are held at different times across India, with a few state polls scheduled almost every year.

India's opposition faces a setback

The outcome in West Bengal is expected to boost Modi's

standing and strengthen his political position midway through his third term in office after the 2024 national election forced his ruling party to rely on regional allies to form a government.

Modi is expected to contest for a record fourth term in office in 2029.

India's opposition has struggled to mount a unified and sustained challenge to the BJP's dominance nationwide.

Banerjee had emerged as one of the most prominent national challengers to Modi, particularly after positioning herself as a key leader to unite regional parties against the BJP. Her defeat is likely to weaken her leverage within an opposition bloc already divided by regional rivalries.