

# Kerala Assembly polls 2026: Adivasi, Dalit outfits extend support to UDF, flag exclusion in candidate selection

Independent candidature plan scrapped to consolidate anti-LDF votes

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THE HINDU BUREAU



M Geethanandan

Various Dalit and Adivasi organisations, including the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha (AGMS) and the Ambedkarite Democratic Front (ADF), have decided to support United Democratic Front (UDF) candidates in all three constituencies in Wayanad district and across the State in the upcoming Assembly elections.

Addressing a press conference at Kalpetta on Monday, M. Geethanandan, State coordinator, AGMS; Sreejith P. Sasi, State council member, ADF; Manikandan C and

Mary Lydia of the Adi Shakti Summer School said they had submitted a charter of demands on Dalit and Adivasi issues to the UDF leadership, which had assured that the concerns would be considered.

However, they expressed strong protest over the exclusion of eligible candidates from Adivasi communities such as the Paniya, Adiya, Kattunayaka and Vettakuruma in the selection of Scheduled Tribe candidates in Wayanad district by both the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the UDF.

The collective said that the denial of social justice in candidate selection in Wayanad for over 60 years had been brought to the attention of Rahul Gandhi, former MP of the Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, the current MP. The issue was also communicated to the Congress State leadership, but to no avail, Mr. Geethanandan said.

They further alleged that neither Mr. Gandhi during his tenure nor Ms. Vadra at present were willing to directly engage with Adivasi communities to understand their issues. In response, the group announced plans to form a “political agitation committee” to bring the matter to national attention. The committee will be officially announced at an Adivasi manifesto convention to be held in Wayanad after the Assembly election results are declared.

The organisations had earlier decided to field an independent candidate from the Paniya community in the Mananthavady constituency in protest against the sidelining of marginalised communities by major political fronts. However, they withdrew the decision due to the early announcement of the election schedule and the lack of adequate preparation. They also said they did not want to miss the opportunity to politically challenge the continuation of the LDF government, which had “undermined Dalit and Adivasi rights”.

The collective alleged that ₹7,411 crore of SC/ST development funds had been wasted during the decade of Left rule. Despite adequate budget allocations, the government disrupted the distribution of e-grants for students, forcing many to drop out of their studies. Around 500 Adivasi families displaced by landslides and floods are yet to be rehabilitated, they said. While a township was inaugurated for victims of the Mundakkai disaster, no rehabilitation package was provided for tribal communities, the organisations added.

They further alleged that instead of rehabilitating the landless, the government had illegally handed over Adivasi land to the Centre for a museum project. They also claimed that reservation policies were being undermined and that backdoor appointments were being made to benefit insiders. The group said that O. R. Kelu, Minister for the Welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes, should respond to these issues as he seeks re-election from Mananthavady.

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