

Moderate polling in peaceful Mizoram

Moderate polling was recorded Tuesday for the assembly elections in the northeastern state of Mizoram with about 30 percent voters exercising their franchise till midday.

The state assembly has 40 seats.

'Polling is going on peacefully with a turnout of an estimated 30 percent recorded till 12.30 p.m. Polling is expected to pick up later in the day,' said Lalhmingthanga, the state's joint chief electoral officer. Balloting ends at 4 p.m.

In some of the polling stations, voting had to be stopped for a while after the electronic voting machines (EVM) developed technical snags. Voting for the 40-member state legislature began at 7 a.m.

In all, 611,124 people, including 308,884 women, are eligible to exercise their franchise to decide the fate of 206 candidates, including nine women and 33 independents.

'The Election Commission has put in place 1,098 electronic voting machines (EVMs) in all the 1,026 polling stations across the state,' the election official said. About 9,000 poll officials have been deployed to conduct the elections. Over 60 percent of them have been classified as hyper-sensitive or sensitive.

Tuesday's vote would decide the fate of Chief Minister Zoramthanga, state Congress chief Lalthanhawla and Brig. T. Sailo of United Democratic Alliance (UDA) and a host of top leaders of various parties.

Besides Zoramthanga, Lalthanhawla and Sailo are the chief ministerial candidates of their respective parties.

The fight for political supremacy in Mizoram is expected to be between the ruling Mizo National Front (MNF), the main opposition Congress party, and the newly formed UDA, a conglomeration of various regional parties.

The ruling MNF is contesting 39 seats leaving one seat to its pre-poll partner, the Mara Democratic Front (MDF).

The opposition Congress is contesting all the 40 seats, while union minister Ram Vilas Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) has fielded candidates in 38 seats.

The UDA, an alliance of Mizoram People's Conference (MPC) and the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP), is contesting 39 seats.

The BJP has put up candidates for nine seats and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) has fielded candidates for six seats.

In the last assembly elections held in 2003, the ruling MNF secured 21 seats while Congress bagged 12 and seven went to other smaller parties.

Tuesday's poll is the sixth assembly election since Mizoram attained statehood in February 1987. Results will be out Dec 8.

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