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**SAS GROUP
(IITians Group)
HYDERABAD**

GROUND ZERO REPORT: BATTLE GROUND -BIHAR

The Bihar Assembly elections are shaping up as a complex contest, influenced mainly by caste loyalties, cash-based welfare schemes, and the concerns of young voters over unemployment. The NDA is relying on its welfare programs and the long governance record of Shri Nitish Kumar, while the Mahagatbandhan (MGB), led by Shri Tejaswi Yadav, is trying to take advantage of anti-incumbency, youth dissatisfaction, and strong support from traditional caste groups. The rise of the Jana Suraj Party (JSP) adds a new factor, especially in urban and semi-urban areas.

1. Caste Vs Cash: "The Main Forces Shaping the Election"

Even though there are several social and economic issues in the state, voting in Bihar still mainly happens along caste lines. Caste loyalties continue to decide how people vote and how alliances work at the local level, more than promises of development. However, the direct financial support given to women voters under NDA schemes (Rs. 10,000 each) has added a new "cash-based" factor to this election. This move may slightly reduce the traditional caste-based voting pattern in some areas.

2. Youth vs Women: Contrasting Electoral Segments

- Youth (18-30 years; approx. 1.72 crore voters):

Unemployment and migration continue to be major issues in the state. The youth seem to be leaning towards the Mahagatbandhan, mainly because they are unhappy with the lack of job opportunities under the NDA government.

➤ **Women Voters:**

The NDA's direct cash transfer of Rs. 10,000/- has created a positive impression among women. However, it is uncertain whether this goodwill will actually convert into votes, especially when many families are still struggling with unemployment.

3. Congress and Mahagatbandhan Dynamics

The Congress, as a part of the Mahagatbandhan, is contesting 61 assembly seats. Out of these, 36 seats have strong BJP and JDU candidates, making them important test areas for Congress performance. The number of seats Congress wins will play a key role in deciding the post-election stability and bargaining power of the Mahagatbandhan.

4. "Internal Challenges Within the NDA"

There seems to be some tension between BJP and JDU workers, as a section of JDU's core voters is not very keen on supporting BJP candidates. The NDA has also not officially announced Shri Nitish Kumar as its Chief Ministerial face, which has led to confusion among EBC (Extremely Backward Class) voters, who are usually JDU supporters. The NDA campaign mainly depends on the Prime Minister and the Home Minister, but it lacks a strong and clear local message for the people.

5. "Mahagatbandhan's Reach Beyond Traditional M-Y Voters"

The Muslim-Yadav (M-Y) alliance remains strong and united. Ground reports suggest that the Mahagatbandhan has managed to move beyond its traditional M-Y support base, gaining noticeable backing from EBC and MBC (Most Backward Class) communities — a key factor if this trend continues until polling day. Shri Tejaswi Yadav's clear projection as the Chief Ministerial face is also striking a positive message among the youth and sections of the non-dominant backward communities.

6. Campaign Comparison

Parameter	NDA	Mahagatbandhan
Campaign Theme	"Jungle Raj vs Development"	"Employment, Corruption, and Anti-Incumbency"
Star Campaigners	PM & Home Minister	Tejaswi Yadav, Rahul Gandhi, Local Leaders
Local Connectivity	Limited	Strong at constituency level
Public Mood	Fatigue with long incumbency	Hope for change

- While the NDA continues to emphasize the RJD's alleged misrule in the past, many voters are questioning the NDA's own 20 years of governance, citing little visible progress in rural infrastructure, education,

healthcare, and employment. There also appears to be a clear disconnect in the NDA's campaign between national-level narratives and local ground realities.

7. The JSP (Jana Suraj Party) Factor – Prashant Kishor's Influence

- The rise of the JSP has added a new dimension to the election, posing a particular challenge to the NDA in urban and semi-urban areas.
- For every 10 votes that JSP receives, approximately 7 are likely to come from the NDA's share and 3 from the Mahagatbandhan.
- JSP's influence remains limited in rural areas because of its weak grassroots level cadre and organization, as per the ground report, it is expected to affect around 32 constituencies, mainly those currently held or contested by the BJP and JDU.
- The Brahmin, Bhumihar, Rajput, and Kayastha communities could shift slightly towards JSP, further weakening the NDA's traditional upper-caste vote base.

8. Manifesto Analysis

Both alliances have made populist promises, but the Mahagatbandhan's manifesto is seen as more focused on youth and employment compared to the NDA's. While the credibility of these promises can be debated, the Mahagatbandhan's message seems to connect better with the concerns and expectations of voters on the ground. So Manifesto of Mahagatbandhan is slightly better in presenting and connecting with people's emotions.

9. What to learn from other State Elections

Based on recent elections in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha, the following operational insights are suggested for the Opposition parties:

- Micro-monitoring of Polling Booths - Keep a close watch on voter turnout patterns at each booth.
- Monitor the opening and closing percentages of EVM batteries to ensure transparency.
- Assess whether the election is seen as a contest between Tejaswi and Nitish or escalates into Rahul Gandhi vs. Modi, as this framing could influence swing voter behavior.

10. Outlook: A Keen Contest

As of current ground assessment, the Bihar Assembly Election 2025 remains a tight contest between the NDA and Mahagatbandhan.

Key deciding factors to watch out:

- The degree of youth mobilization by MGB.
- The retention of women beneficiaries by NDA.
- The extent of vote-splitting due to JSP's urban presence.
- The turnout levels among EBC and MBC communities.

Conclusion

The Bihar election is at a delicate balance, where caste loyalties and cash benefits intersect with the hopes and aspirations of the younger generation. The final result will depend on whether the Mahagatbandhan's emotional and aspirational appeal can outweigh the NDA's welfare-focused support, and whether the JSP's quiet gains in urban areas can influence key constituencies.

The overall ground mood points to a closely fought with both alliances facing internal and external challenges that could shape the final outcome.

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