

Bihar Assembly Elections: The NDA Emerges as Frontrunner

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Summary

The Assembly elections in Bihar will be held in two phases on 6 and 11 November 2025 with the results being announced on 14 November 2025. The ruling National Democratic Alliance, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Janata Dal (United), seems to be ahead of the opposition Mahagatbandhan alliance comprising the Rashtriya Janata Dal, the Congress and several smaller parties.

The announcement by the Election Commission of India (ECI) on the Assembly elections in Bihar, which will be held in two phases on 6 and 11 November 2025 with counting of votes on 14 November 2025, has been somewhat overshadowed by the ECI's [Special Intensive Revision](#) (SIR). The SIR, which aimed to ensure that no eligible citizen is left out of the electoral rolls and to weed out ineligible persons has triggered a political row.

The exercise, which resulted in the exclusion of 6.5 million voters, has not only provoked protests from opposition parties and civil society groups but continues to be challenged in court. At a hearing on 16 October 2025, [the Supreme Court](#) voiced concerns over the deletions and discrepancies in the electoral rolls. The next hearing is scheduled for 4 November 2025, two days before the Bihar election.

While controversies continue over the SIR, the political parties have begun their campaign in earnest. The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)], has been quick off the blocks. Of the 243 seats in Bihar, the BJP and JD(U) are contesting 101 each. The remaining constituents of the NDA – Chirag Paswan's Lok Janashakti Party (Ram Vilas), Rashtriya Lok Morcha and Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) – are contesting 29 and six seats each respectively.

Leaving aside the constituencies reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the BJP has distributed tickets fairly evenly between the upper castes, Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs). The party has not fielded a single Muslim candidate though the community constitutes nearly 18 per cent of Bihar's population .

The ticket distribution of the JD(U) is heavily skewed in favour of the OBCs and EBCs. More than half of JD(U)'s candidates are either OBCs or EBCs with the Kushwahas having received the largest share of tickets at 12. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's own caste group – the Kurmis – has been allotted 11 tickets. Unlike the BJP, the JD(U) has fielded four Muslim candidates, down from 11 in 2020.

The OBCs and EBCs are being targeted since together they comprise over half of Bihar's population. According to a [2023 caste survey](#) conducted in the state, the EBCs constitute 36

per cent of Bihar's population and the OBCs 27 per cent. Indeed, the EBCs are increasingly seen as holding the key to electoral success especially in close contests. With 130 sub-castes, including Nishads, Telis, Lohars and Kumhars, and spread across the state, they are influential in deciding electoral outcomes in over 120 seats in Bihar.

Nitish had been ahead of the curve in reaching out to the EBCs when he granted 18 per cent reservation for the EBCs in jobs and education as early as 2005. This had paid dividends since – according to the [CSDS-Lokniti poll survey](#), 58 per cent of the EBCs supported the NDA and only 18 per cent were in favour of the opposition Mahagatbandhan alliance in the 2020 Assembly elections. However, the 2023 caste census has revealed that the EBCs are excluded from powerful political posts and are also lagging behind in government jobs. The EBCs are not too pleased either with Nitish's frequent switching of political affiliations.

In contrast to the NDA, the Mahagatbandhan, comprising the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), the Congress and several parties, including the Left parties, has been unable to get its act together. In 2020, the Mahagatbandhan ran NDA close, winning 110 seats, compared to the latter's 125 seats, and won roughly the same vote share as the NDA at 37 per cent. The RJD, led by Tejashwi Yadav, had emerged as the single largest party in the Assembly, winning 75 of the 144 seats it contested. However, the Congress pulled the alliance down, winning only 19 of the 70 seats it contested.

This time, the alliance has gotten off to a rocky start. The RJD and the Congress failed to strike a formal seat-sharing deal raising the possibility of Mahagatbandhan candidates contesting against each other in a few constituencies. The RJD has released a list of 143 candidates. In an effort to consolidate its Muslim-Yadav base, the party has nominated 35 candidates from the Yadav community along with 18 Muslims. The Congress has released three lists with a total of 60 candidates and, as of now, its candidates are pitted against the RJD in six constituencies.

Besides the seat-sharing issues, the Mahagatbandhan could be further hamstrung by the presence of former election strategist Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraj Party (JSP). The JSP has already shown that it can hurt the Mahagatbandhan. During the by-elections for four Assembly seats in Bihar in November 2024, although the NDA won all four seats, the JSP won 10 per cent of the vote share, which was roughly the difference in vote share between the NDA and Mahagatbandhan. There are other players in the fray who could dent the Mahagatbandhan, including the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen and Aam Aadmi Party, both of which are fielding candidates.

The disunity in the opposition, along with the JSP's potential to hurt the opposition, gives NDA the edge in the coming election. According to a [recent opinion poll](#), the NDA is the frontrunner to return to power though it also found Tejashwi is the most preferred choice for chief minister.

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