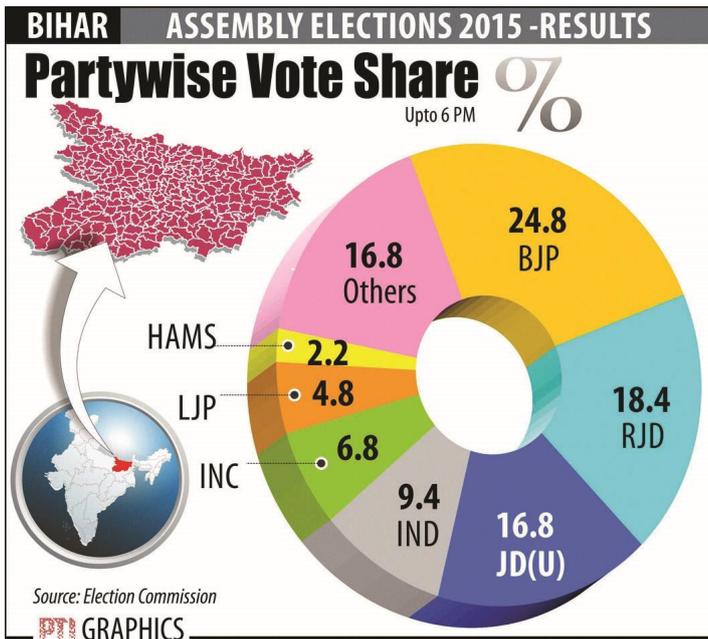


Bihari trumps Bahari

Written by Administrator
Monday, 09 November 2015 13:23

By Sidharth Mishra



The landslide victory for the Nitish Kumar-led Grand Alliance in the Bihar Assembly polls could be best summed up as an articulate and humble Bihar Chief Minister scoring over an aggressive and at times abrasive Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This is only the second time in the nation's political history that a Prime Minister has been trumped by a Chief Minister. The other occasion being when Jyoti Basu had shown Rajiv Gandhi his place in the 1987 West Bengal Assembly polls.

With a resounding mandate, Kumar will enter office as Chief Minister for the fifth time and the onus on him this time around be greater to exorcise the state of the ills and influences of the Lalu Yadav-Rabri Devi regime, who were his allies in these polls.

The signs for the BJP were ominous in the state after Nitish Kumar raised the issue of Bihari versus 'Bahari' (outsider). With the party pitted against a recognizable and affable Chief Ministerial face, the BJP made the mistake of going to the polls banking only on the 'charisma' of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which miserably failed to cut ice with voters in the state. The newspapers in Patna and other parts of the state were full of reports in the run-up to the poll about who could be Bihar's Khattar (referring to Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar). In other words, if the BJP came to power, which unknown entity would the party leadership foist as the chief minister.

The voter in Bihar was no mood to have Patna governed by the leadership in New Delhi. Though the party tried to make amends by propping up names and faces of Bihar BJP leaders after the third phase, it was too late in the day as the dye had been cast against the 'Bahari' (read Modi-Amit Shah team). Some of the leaders like Shatrughan Sinha questioned the party strategy of not allowing any other leader's charisma share space with the Prime Minister. As the results show, the name and appeal of the Prime Minister failed to provide sufficient arsenal to party in the prestigious electoral battle.

As a political party, it's important for the BJP to win elections, however, to make an issue out of

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beef seemed to backfire. The BJP leaders went to town claiming that beef was made a poll issue not by them but their rivals. Despite their claims, leaders from the BJP were imprudent enough to allow themselves to be drawn into this controversy. The failure of party leadership to reprimand those stoking the beef-related controversy, did not go down well with Bihar's electorate.

The poll campaign in Bihar, when it started two months back, began on an blistering note with both the main political gladiators – the BJP and Nitish Kumar's Grand Alliance talking of development as their prime agenda. However, as the campaign progressed, it turned progressively ugly. With Prime Minister Narendra Modi calling Lalu Prasad Yadav's Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) as Rashtriya Jadu Tona Dal, the campaign plunged to its lowest point. Lalu Prasad Yadav is now all set to exact his revenge by holding a victory rally in PM Modi's constituency – Varanasi.

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