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Tough task: On the battle lines in the Jharkhand Assembly election

As one of India's relatively younger States that is home to one of its largest tribal populations, and a supplier of much of the country's mineral resources, but with nearly a quarter of its populace poverty-stricken, Jharkhand's significance needs no elaboration. With the Assembly elections in two phases, on November 13 and 20, the battle lines are clearly drawn between the two **coalitions** — the ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led INDIA bloc and the Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA. For a State that has seen frequent changes in coalitions and leadership, the last two tenures, that of the BJP (2014-19) and of the JMM-led coalition (2019-24), have been relatively stable. Chief Minister Hemant Soren managed to weather a **tempest** after having to resign over his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate and regaining his post after his bail. In the 2024 general election, his arrest by the Centre was seen by tribals as being **vindictive**, which helped the JMM and its ally, the Congress, to win all five seats reserved for Scheduled Tribe candidates, among the 14 in the State. But the BJP and its ally, the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU), still managed to get 47.2% of the vote against the INDIA bloc's 39.62%, suggesting a clear tribal versus non-tribal divide — Adivasis form 26.21% of Jharkhand's population.

By **firming up** its alliance with the AJSU, the BJP expects better Assembly poll results than what transpired in 2019 when the two contested separately. If candidate announcements and seat sharing are any indication, the BJP-led alliance has shown greater **cohesion** than the INDIA bloc in which the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the CPI(ML)-Liberation have shown some **discontent** over seat allocations. On the narrative front, the Hemant Soren-led INDIA bloc is seeking to **consolidate** its tribal support base, while **yearning** for the **affirmation** of other voters for the welfare schemes its government has implemented. The Maiya Samman Yojana, a cash transfer scheme for women, is quite popular, but it remains to be seen whether it will win votes for the alliance instead of **plaudits** alone. The BJP is aware of the divide and has sought to frame a problematic narrative of “infiltrators” — a **dog whistle** for Muslims — gaining benefits at the expense of tribals besides fielding defectors from the JMM such as former Chief Minister Champai Soren to undercut the JMM’s support base. Only the results will tell whether Hemant Soren’s plea to voters to see through this divisive **ploy** is successful, but mere **lip service** without strong organisational and resourceful efforts by the INDIA bloc to counter the BJP-led coalition’s mobilisation in Jharkhand will be futile in its effort to retain power.

Summary –

Jharkhand, a mineral-rich state with a significant tribal population and widespread poverty, faces a critical Assembly election in November. The contest is between the ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led INDIA bloc and the BJP-led NDA. The BJP, allied with the AJSU, hopes to improve on its 2019 performance by presenting a united front, while the INDIA bloc faces internal tensions. Hemant Soren's government seeks tribal support, promoting schemes like the Maiya Samman Yojana for women. Meanwhile, the BJP emphasizes issues like "infiltrators" to appeal to tribals. The INDIA bloc must mobilize effectively to counter the BJP's influence and retain power.

Vocabulary –

1. Coalition (Noun) गठबंधन, संधि

Meaning – an alliance or partnership, often formed temporarily, among different groups, individuals, or entities that come together to achieve a common goal or purpose.

Synonyms – Alliance, Union, Partnership

Antonyms – Division, Separation, Disunion

2. Vindictive (Adj) (प्रतिशोधी)

Meaning: Having or showing a strong desire for revenge.

Synonyms: Vengeful, resentful, spiteful

Antonyms: Forgiving, lenient, merciful

Example: The tribals perceived the arrest of Hemant Soren as a vindictive act by the central government.

3. Tempest(Noun) (तूफान)

Meaning: A violent storm; or metaphorically, a great upheaval or trouble.

Synonyms: Storm, turmoil, upheaval

Antonyms: Calm, peace, tranquility

Example: The Chief Minister managed to weather the tempest of legal battles and returned to his position.

4. Plaudits (Noun)(प्रशंसा)-

Meaning: Praise, applause, or approval.

Synonyms: Praise, acclaim, commendation

Antonyms: Criticism, disapproval, reproach

Example: The welfare scheme received plaudits, but it remains uncertain if it will convert to votes.

5. Discontent (Noun)(असंतोष)

Meaning- Dissatisfaction with one's circumstances.

Synonyms: Dissatisfaction, unhappiness, displeasure

Antonyms: Satisfaction, contentment, approval

Example: There is visible discontent among the INDIA bloc's allies over seat distribution.

6. Cohesion (Noun)संगठन, एकता

Meaning – The act or state of sticking together or forming a unified whole.

Synonyms – Unity, Solidarity, Harmony, Coherence.

Antonyms – Disunity, Division, Incoherence, Discord.

Example – The cohesion among the team members allowed them to complete the project successfully and on time.

7. Ploy (Noun) युक्ति, चाल

Meaning – A ploy is a cunning plan or tactic designed to gain an advantage, usually in a subtle or clever way.

Synonyms – Trick, Maneuver, Stratagem, Ruse.

Antonyms – Honesty, Truthfulness, Simplicity.

Example – She used a clever ploy to win the game.

8. Consolidate (Verb) संगठित करना, मजबूत करना

Meaning – It describes the action of combining, strengthening, or making something more stable.

Synonyms – Integrate, Strengthen, Fortify, Amalgamate.

Antonyms – Separate, Weaken, Scatter, Dismantle.

Example – The company decided to consolidate its offices to reduce costs and improve teamwork.

9. Affirmation (Noun) पुष्टि

Meaning: The action of affirming or validating something.

Synonyms: Confirmation, endorsement, assertion

Antonyms: Denial, rejection, refutation

Example: The INDIA bloc seeks affirmation from voters for the welfare schemes it implemented.

10. Yearning (Noun, Adj) आकांक्षा, लंबी इच्छा

Meaning –A deep, emotional longing or desire for something that is often difficult to attain. It can imply a sense of wistfulness or nostalgia.

Synonyms – Longing, Desire, Craving.

Antonyms – Disinterest, Apathy, Indifference.

Example – Despite her success, she often felt a yearning for simpler times.

Phrases-

1. Dog whistle (संकेत शब्द)

Meaning: A coded message that conveys a controversial idea to a particular audience without others noticing.

Synonyms: Code, insinuation, hint

Antonyms: Transparency, openness, directness

Example: The BJP's narrative around "infiltrators" is seen as a dog whistle to its supporter.

2. Lip service –

Meaning – The act of expressing support or agreement for something in words only, without any intention of following through with actions or genuine commitment.

3. Firming Up-

Meaning – To make something more solid, stable, or secure.

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