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- ❖ **China's OBOR Initiative**
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Third Concept aims at providing a platform where a meaningful exchange of ideas can take place among the people of the Third World. The attempt will be to communicate, debate and disseminate information, ideas and alternatives for the resolution of the common problems facing humankind. We welcome contributions from academics, journalists and even from those who may never have published anything before. The only requirement is a concern for and desire to understand and take the issue of our time. Contributions may be descriptive, analytical or theoretical. They may be in the form of original articles, reactions to previous contributions, or even a comment on a prevailing situation. All contributions, neatly typed in double space, may be addressed to:

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Re nascent Bihar

The recent landslide stunning victory of Mahagathbandhan, comprising Janata Dal-United or JD (U), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and Congress, in Bihar under the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has manifested the political maturity of the people of Bihar and rejection of attempts to polarize society on communal lines. The massive support for Mahagathbandhan had cut across communities, without which it would not have been possible for it to garner gigantic victory by winning an impressive 178 seats in a house of 243 seats.

The success of Mahgathbandhan lay in the way it converted arithmetic into chemistry. Together, the JD (U), the RJD and the Congress had polled 45% of the vote in 2014 Lok Sabha polls and this is almost the vote-share they have polled in 2015 in State Assembly elections. Steps like coming together of the former rivals Nitish and Lalu, the RJD supremo agreeing to Nitish being the chief ministerial candidate and with the distribution of tickets taking place amicably virtually paved way for Mahgathbandhan; a demonstration of which had been made in the assembly by-polls held in August 2014. Another important factor that favoured Mahgathbandhan was the unanimity over transferring their vote-base to each other. The good work done by the Nitish government in the past by building new roads, increased electricity supply and provision of cycles to girl students to go to school and college was perhaps a bottom-up model of development of the Nitish government which proved instrumental in building an undercurrent of sympathy for Mahagathbandhan.

What resulted in a gel being cemented between the constituents of Mahagathbandhan was the BJP's unraveling of its 'true agenda' silently endorsed by Modi. Just few months before the run-up to the Bihar elections, BJP had embarked upon a naked embrace of majoritarianism by extending vocal support for beef bans, subliminal messages reeking of cultural intolerance and so on. Undoubtedly, BJP's so-called 'development mantra' had always been for expedience in garnering support from the upper-middle classes, an aspirational youth and the business classes; nevertheless, there was little in terms of difference of emphasis or in performance on the development front from the BJP since it came to power in May 2014. BJP's strategy of a 'Modi-centric' campaign 'lacked credibility' because of the un-kept promises of the past and its 'divisive tactics' also failed to cut ice with the Bihar electorate. The loss of Bihar is a clear setback for the communal agenda of the BJP and it also suggests that the BJP can't merely paper over this subliminal push for a reversal of India's secular ethos, and communitarian welfare model through a Hindutva model of consolidation by posturing as a party setting out to achieve 'development.'

In 2015 alone the BJP has suffered two electoral debacles, first in Delhi in February and now in Bihar. Undoubtedly, the defeat in Delhi was passed off as an aberration; nonetheless, Bihar has turned out to be different. BJP's one-size-fits-all campaign strategy lost its novelty in Bihar, a complex state, where political discourse ranged from caste to development to religion. The first national impact of Mahagathbandhan's emphatic Bihar victory is being felt in the current winter session of the Parliament where the discussion on intolerance and constitution is taking place and an emboldened Opposition taking the Modi government to task. A streak of change, though mild, is becoming discernible in NDA government's attitude towards the Opposition and in Modi's address to Lok Sabha and then in Rajya Sabha. In the wake of pending host of reform legislation bills like GST bill, the real estate regulatory authority bill and the ambitious labour reforms, the ruling dispensation is likely to soften its attitude towards the Opposition to elicit its support for the passage of these bills in the current session. Some political pundits feel that Bihar has delivered a tectonic verdict that will have a variety of implications for national politics and governance. The success of Mahagathbandhan can be seen as the beginnings of a consolidation of state parties to check the BJP's advance.

Nitish Kumar is heading an inherently fragile coalition of three parties which are quite different from one another temperamentally and culturally and he will be having an unenviable task of managing extreme contradictions on his hands. He will have to tread cautiously.

— BK