

Bihar Elections - Digital Campaigning on Facebook

Key Findings

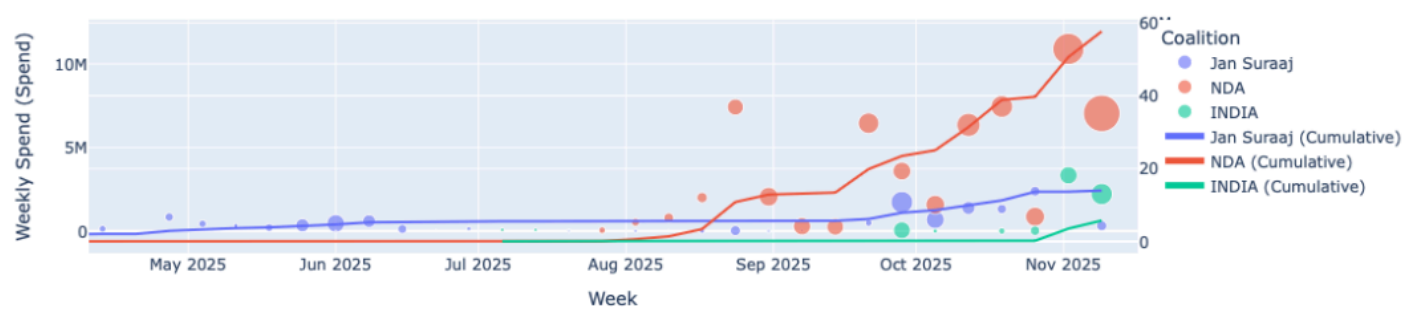
1. Official ad spend across political parties is Rs. 7.8 crore, out of which BJP has spent Rs. 5.6 crores.
2. However, unofficial ad spend accounts for Rs. 2.9 crore, all of which is unaccounted for campaign expenditure, not declared to the ECI but clearly used for political campaigning.
3. We notice a new trend of News Media pages that are running ads on videos that appear to be vox pop style reportage but are clearly linked to one or the other political party and narrative, such as Bihar Live for JDU and Today Bihar News for RJD.
4. DD News, a public sector broadcast channel is running ads targeted in Bihar attacking the leader of the opposition Rahul Gandhi on his claims related to electoral roll verification.
5. Candidate Fan pages continue to violate ECI guidelines wherein this expenditure is unaccounted for in ECI affidavits, possibly violating the expenditure limit of Rs. 40 lakh per candidate. For example Samrat Choudhary (BJP) has official ad spend of Rs 8.6 lakh (which should be declared to the ECI), but candidate fan pages are adding 20% more expenditure that is unaccounted for.
6. Two pages are putting out particularly vile content Bhak Bhudbak and Jungle Raaj attacking the Yadav family through de-humaising imagery and casteist language. Neither of these pages have provided any verification information, yet continue to spend high amounts in the days before election, without any accountability.
7. Previous reports showed that Facebook was consistently giving more views per rupee spent to shadow pages than official pages thus incentivising hate speech. Now Facebook has removed impression data making it difficult to replicate that research for Bihar. This is likely to be a continuing trend.
8. Government pages also increased its spending in the months leading up to the election, amounting to Rs. 23.6 lakh. The ad spending clearly correlates with election season, in clear violation of norms.
9. We call on ECI to ensure that Meta strictly enforces its advertiser verification policies, especially for political ads.

Official Spending

Over the past year and into election season, political parties in Bihar have been spending heavily on advertising on Facebook, amounting to at least Rs. 7.8 crores. BJP Bihar has spent Rs. 5.6 crores, Jan Suraaj has spent Rs. 1.4 crores, JDU has spent Rs. 17.8 lakh, RJD has spent Rs. 8.7 lakh and INC has spent Rs. 57 lakh. BJP accounts for 70% of the total official ad spend during the elections. Researchers have shown how BJP Bihar has used its official account and these considerable resources to push out hate speech targeted towards minorities on themes of “Namak Haraam” and “[Ghuspetiyan](#).”

Table1 Party Wise Official Ad Spend (in Rs. lakhs)		
Party	Ad Spend	Ads
BJP Bihar	558.6	2,808
Jan Suraaj	139.9	1,991
Janata Dal United	17.8	356
Rashtriya Janata Dal	8.7	109
INC Bihar	57.7	620
Total	782.7	5,884

Weekly Ad Spend (Bubbles) vs. Cumulative Spend (Lines)





Shadow Universe

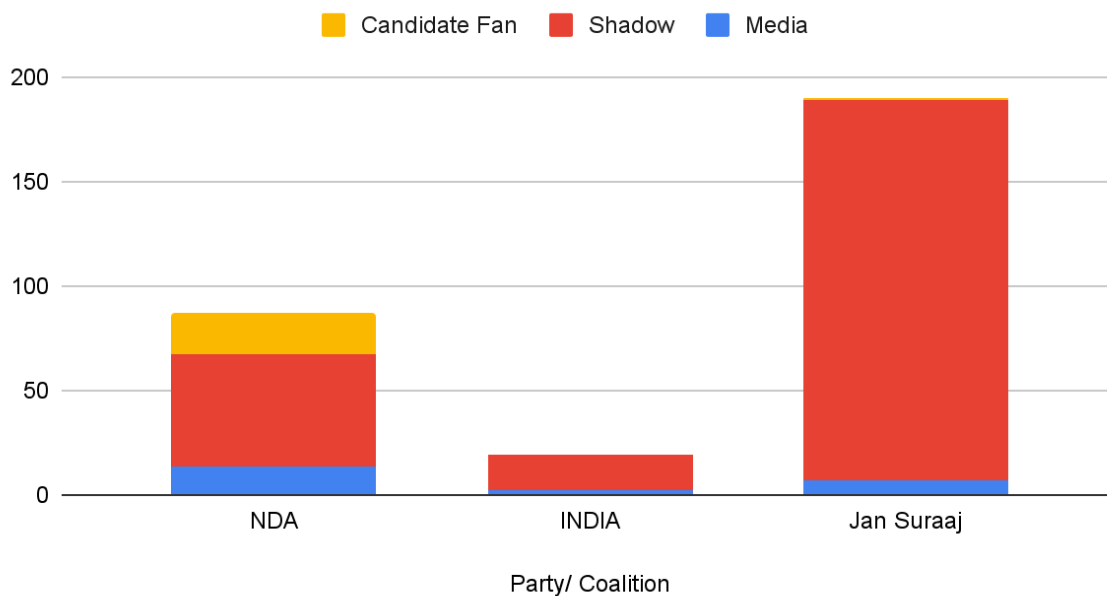
However, as noted in [previous reports](#), official ad spend is only one portion of digital campaigning. Shadow ads, run by entities clearly linked to political campaigning but not declaring themselves as such have proliferated across social media. In Bihar we noticed three main types of shadow pages. The first is “News Media” appearing as news but only providing content either for or against one party. The other continuing trend is the existence of “fan pages” for candidates. The third category are shadow pages that post inflammatory attack ads but without clear advertiser verification information, such as “Bhak Bhudbak” and “Jungle Raaj.”

Taken together, the shadow universe gives an additional unaccounted for ad spend of Rs. 3 crore. This amount is not declared by parties in their filings with the election commission but are an active part of the campaign.

Table 2: Shadow Universe (in Rs. lakhs)				
Party/ Coalition	Media	Shadow	Candidate Fan	Total
NDA	13.7	54.1	19.4	87.2
INDIA	2.1	17.2	0.0	19.4
Jan Suraj	6.7	182.2	1.3	190.2
	22.5	253.6	20.7	296.8

Source: [Dataset](#) compiled from Meta Ad Library

Media, Shadow & Candidate Fan Page Spends (in INR Lacs)



News Media

Adopted as a strategy across parties, these “news media” pages consist of vox pop style interviews highlighting their key narratives. Take for example, Bihar Live, which has spent close to Rs 4 lakh in advertising, with a following of 650 thousand on its Facebook page. Its content is consistently anti-RJD though it is presented as everyday people talking about crime. Contrast this with Today Bihar News with 274 thousand followers, spending Rs. 50,000 on advertisements. The content here while presented as news is valourizing Tejashwi Yadav and the RJD. We also found DD News Live, a public sector broadcast channel running ads targeted in Bihar attacking the leader of the opposition Rahul Gandhi on his claims related to electoral roll verification.



Bihar Live

2h · 🌐

...

What is Yadav community saying about voting for RJD amidst election activity in Bihar

⚙️ · [See original](#) · [Rate this translation](#)

बिहार के यादवों को भी सता रहा है
जंगलराज का खौफ



Click to expand

⏸ 0:22 / 1:12



👍 158

4 comments 10 shares



Today Bihar News

15m · 🌐

...

Farbisganj Assembly: BJP or Congress, Tejashwi Yadav's face is effective, public told the atmosphere

⚙️ · [See original](#) · [Rate this translation](#)



👍 1

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share

Inactive

Library ID: 821377590861243

5 Nov 2025 - 7 Nov 2025 · Total active time 23 hrs

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: >1M

Amount spent (INR): ₹900-₹999

Impressions: 90K-100K

See ad details



DDNewsLive

Sponsored · Published by DDNewsLive

Journalist's Sharp Question — Rahul Gandhi Evades Again?
Last time, the Election Commission dismissed the allegations as "baseless."

Now, with "evidence" in hand will Rahul Gandhi move court?

Will he demand the dismissal of the Haryana Government?

...



Inactive

Library ID: 1351397199168709

5 Nov 2025 - 7 Nov 2025 · Total active time 23 hrs

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: >1M

Amount spent (INR): ₹900-₹999

Impressions: 80K-90K

See ad details



DDNewsLive

Sponsored · Published by DDNewsLive

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju hit back at Rahul Gandhi's vote theft claims regarding the Haryana polls, stating the LoP is trying to "hide his failures" and "deviate attention" from the forthcoming Bihar elections.

Union Minister Rijiju advised the Congress leader to focus on "serious issues" and avoid "irrelevant" distractions....



Inactive

Library ID: 25247531071507724

5 Nov 2025 - 7 Nov 2025 · Total active time 23 hrs

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: >1M

Amount spent (INR): ₹900-₹999

Impressions: 35K-40K

See ad details

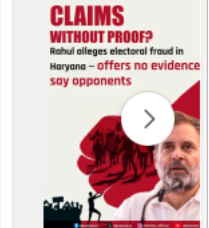
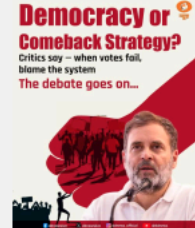


DDNewsLive

Sponsored · Published by DDNewsLive

A remark that reignited the political firestorm.
Rahul Gandhi's call to "restore democracy" has triggered sharp reactions across the spectrum.

#RahulGandhi #DemocracyDebate #IndianPolitics #India #NewsUpdate



Candidate Fan Pages

ECI guidelines restrict spending per candidate to Rs. 40 lakh. One way to circumvent declaration of digital campaign expenditure is to run ads as “fan pages” instead of through verified candidate pages that need to be submitted to the ECI. We found fan pages of Ashok Choudhary (JDU), Sanjay Saraogi (BJP) and Nirbhay Pratap Singh (BJP) among others.

Take for example Samrat Choudhary (BJP). While his official page has an ad spend of Rs 8.6 lakh (which should be declared to the ECI), the unofficial ad spend through a series of pages adds about 20% to this amounting to Rs. 2.3 lakh. These pages are: [Yuva Bihar with Samrat](#), [Samrat for Viksit Bihar](#), [Bihar With Samrat](#), [Abki Baar Samrat Sarkar](#), [Samrat Choudhary fanclub](#), [Samrat Live](#), [Chunavi Yatra Samrat Ke Sath](#) and [टीम : डिप्टी सीएम](#).

Inactive

Library ID: 1277242494200393

8 Oct 2025 - 10 Oct 2025

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: >1M

Amount spent (INR): ₹600-₹699

Impressions: 250K-300K

See ad details

 **Nature Village जमुई-बिहार**
Sponsored • Published by Nature Village

पिता के साथ जुड़ाव पर पूर्व अंचलाधिकारी निर्भय प्रताप सिंह ने बताया कि पिताजी के साथ मेरा बहुत ही भावुकपूर्ण रिश्ता है, मैं अभी भी उनको विशेष मौके पर खत लिखता हूँ। बिहार में एक कहावत है कि खेत बेचकर अभिभावक अपने बच्चों को पढ़ाते हैं वो सही बात है, क्योंकि हम भाईयों के पढ़ाई के लिए भी पिताजी को खेत बेचना पड़ा था।



Inactive

Library ID: 1520960572259064

8 Oct 2025 - 10 Oct 2025

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: >1M

Amount spent (INR): ₹600-₹699

Impressions: 250K-300K

See ad details

 **Nature Village जमुई-बिहार**
Sponsored • Published by Nature Village

केवल नाम से ही नहीं, काम से भी हैं निर्भय।
हर कदम पर समाज, हर निर्णय में सेवा, हर प्रयास में आत्मनिर्भरता.... यही है निर्भय प्रताप सिंह की पहचान।

<https://www.instagram.com/nirbhaypratapsingh065/>

#JamuiKiPehchaan #NirbhayPratapSingh ...





Apna Ashok

Sponsored • Published by Apna Ashok

कच्ची सड़कों से पक्की राहों तक... यह सिर्फ सड़कों का जाल नहीं, यह गांवों को शहरों से और लोगों को उनके घरों से जोड़ने की कहानी है। माननीय मुख्यमंत्री श्री नीतीश कुमार जी के नेतृत्व में ग्रामीण बिहार की तस्वीर बदल गई है, जहां अब लोग आसानी से अपने गांव लौट सकते हैं। इसीलिए बिहार कह रहा है - 25 से 30, फिर से नीतीश!



✓ Active

...

Library ID: 1570063724154068

Started running on 8 Nov 2025 • Total active time 13 hrs

Platforms

Categories

2 ads use this creative and text

See summary details



Apna Ashok

Sponsored • Published by Apna Ashok

गाँव-गली से उठती यह आवाज बता रही है कि माताओं-बहनों का विश्वास माननीय मुख्यमंत्री श्री नीतीश कुमार जी के साथ है। यह गीत सिर्फ एक लोकगीत नहीं, बल्कि सुशासन के प्रति जनता के भरोसे की गूँज है।



✓ Active

...

Library ID: 688662447225561

Started running on 5 Nov 2025

Platforms

Categories

👤 Estimated audience size: >1M

📄 Amount spent (INR): ₹800-₹899

👁 Impressions: 125K-150K

Adobe Acrobat

Active

Library ID: 24314066554927135

Started running on 14 Aug 2025

Platforms  

Categories 

Estimated audience size: >1M 

Amount spent (INR): ₹8K-₹9K 

Impressions: 600K-700K 

See ad details



बिहार का सम्राट

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INSTAGRAM.COM

instagram.com

Visit Instragr...

Active

Library ID: 1181383044006527

Started running on 14 Aug 2025

Platforms  

Categories 

Estimated audience size: >1M 

Amount spent (INR): ₹35K-₹40K 

Impressions: >1M 

See ad details



बिहार का सम्राट

Sponsored • Published by UMB Star Consultancy



INSTAGRAM.COM

instagram.com

Visit Instragr...

Shadow Pages

While earlier shadow pages were used to put out hate speech and content that violates community guidelines, with Bihar we see the narratives of shadow and official pages to be much closer. However, parties are using shadow pages to spend more in an unaccountable manner as compared to official pages. Jan Suraj has spent more through its shadow pages (such as Bihar Badlav Abhiyan and JS Digital Yoddha) than its official account. Perhaps the strategy is to create a sense of omnipresence. The content is largely the same, heavily focused on Prashant Kishore's speeches. JDU has spent more through its shadow pages such as [Nitish Cares](#) and [25 से 30 फ़िर से नीतीश](#). Again the content is fairly direct featuring images of Nitish Kumar as Chief Minister, images indistinguishable from official JDU page or even official government pages. RJD is spending almost double through its shadow page [बदलो सरकार - बदलो बिहार](#) than its official page.

Table 3: Comparing Official vs Shadow Ad Spend (in lakhs)				
	Official Ad Spend	Shadow Ad Spend	Total	% via Shadow
RJD	8.7	17	25.7	66%

JDU	17.8	25	42.8	58%
Jan Suraaaj	139.9	190.2	330.1	58%

Out of the handful of pages are running attack ads, the worst are [Bhak Budbak - भक बुडबक](#) and [Jungle Raj - जंगलराज](#). These appear to be in the more traditional style of BJP-affiliated shadow pages given the high ad spend and nature of content. Neither of these pages have any information on the advertiser, raising again the questions of Meta's advertiser verification processes, especially for elections.

Out of the top shadow pages, we found the content to mostly be targeted to RJD and against the Yadav family. The verification information provided for all of these accounts was unsatisfactory as per Facebook's own guidelines, and definitely in violation of ECI guidelines.

Meta is yet again allowing shadow pages to push out derogatory attack ads during an election with no information with no information on who is running these ads.

 Bhak Budbak - भक बुडबक

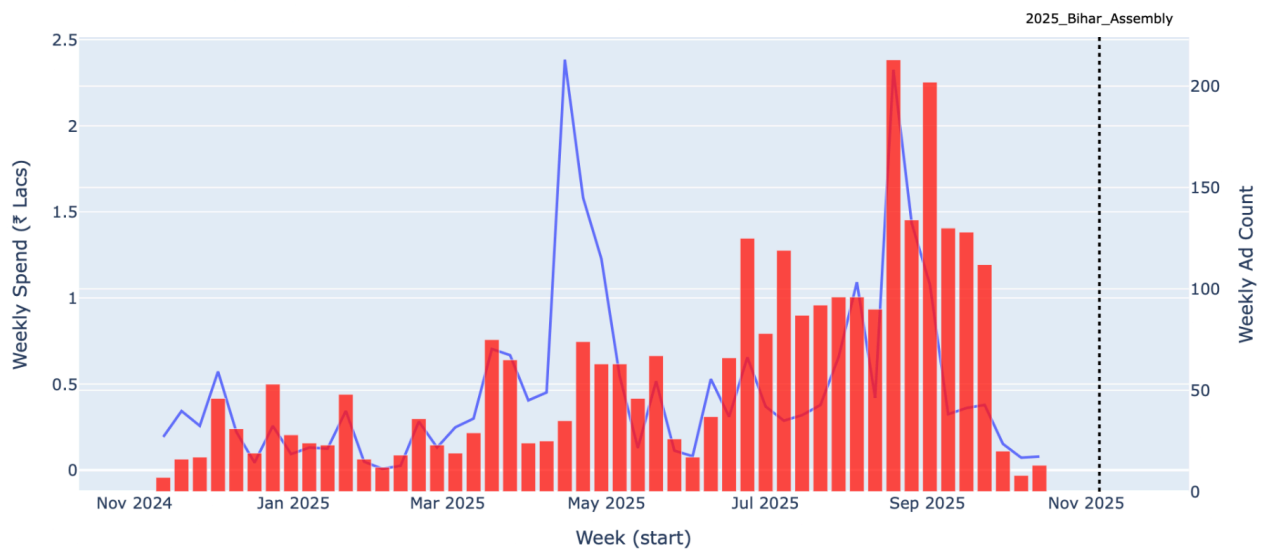


The image displays a collection of 18 political attack ads from the Bhak Budbak Facebook page. The ads are arranged in a grid and feature various political figures, including Lalu Prasad Yadav, and contain inflammatory text targeting the RJD and the Yadav family. Some ads include dates of elections and claims of victory.



Government resources are not allowed to be used for political campaigning. We found that the Government of Bihar increased its spending in the months leading up to the election, amounting to Rs. 23.6 lakh. As visible in the graph below, the ad spending clearly correlates with election season, in clear violation of norms.

Government pages since 2024-11-01: Spend & Counts — Total Spend ₹23.6L, Total Ads 2891



We found **6 pages run by the Government of Bihar that only got active in the months before the elections.** These are Bihar State Sports Authority, Building Construction Department, Information and Public Relations Department, Planning and Development Department, Prohibition, Excise and Registration Department and Revenue and Land Reforms Department.

These pages were all started in early 2024 and were muted till Nov 2024 and restart during election season in Bihar in 2025.

Recommendations

We [reiterate](#) recommendations already provided in the public domain.

For Meta

1. Improve political advertiser verification. Require enough information for independent verification of the real world candidate, party or entity responsible for the ad. The current system is clearly not working with junk email addresses and defunct phone numbers.
2. Immediately take action against advertisers that repeatedly run ads in violation of Meta's guidelines, containing hate speech and operating in a coordinated manner. Be consistent in moderation decisions of advertising policies. Explain why ads have breached policy, not just hide the ad in the library.
3. Through the channels established via the Voluntary Code of Conduct, inform the Election Commission of India of ads running in violation of electoral laws, ads running without pre-certification and candidates breaching campaign expenditure limits.
4. Improve the ad library by providing options to select specific time periods not just ranges, and provide image descriptions, video transcripts and subtitles in ads and ad libraries. Make separate political ads from social and issue-based ads. Make specific spending figures for each political ad. Bring back the removed filter of impressions in the ad library.

In addition, Meta must follow [the recommendations](#) of 35+ civil society organisations proposed for elections last year.¹

For Election Commission of India

1. Immediately take action against shadow advertisers on social media running ads in violation of Supreme Court orders and ECI guidelines. Expenditure on shadow networks running digital ads must be declared by political parties.
2. Require platforms to report ads running in violation of electoral laws, ads running without pre-certification and candidates breaching campaign expenditure limits.
3. Disclose communications with social media platforms, as established by the Voluntary Code of Conduct.
4. Initiate a participatory process to develop a model code of conduct for social media to upgrade rules around digital political ads.

In addition, we reiterate [the recommendations](#) of 11+ Indian civil society organisations proposed for the national elections earlier this year.²

¹ April 2024. Enforce the political advertising silence period and take comprehensive measures to uphold human rights during India's elections.

<https://thelondonstory.org/wp-content/uploads/Letter-to-Meta-by-38-CSOs-on-Indian-elections.pdf>

² Internet Freedom Foundation. April 2024. <https://internetfreedom.in/civil-society-writes-to-eci-on-2024-elections/>

