

Contemporary Issue (Special Intensive Revision)

Overview of the Issue

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is a comprehensive, house-to-house verification process of India's electoral rolls conducted by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to ensure accuracy and inclusion before major elections. The process has generated significant debate due to its potential for both purifying voter lists and inadvertently disenfranchising eligible voters, particularly marginalized communities.



Note Points to understand the Issue

➤ Core Objectives:

- **Accuracy:** To correct errors, remove duplicate entries, deceased voters, and ineligible persons from the voter list.
- **Inclusion:** To ensure all eligible citizens (age 18+) who are "ordinarily resident" in a constituency are included, especially first-time voters, migrants, and previously omitted individuals.
- **Integrity:** To strengthen public trust in the electoral process by creating a clean, pure, and transparent roll, thereby reinforcing the "one person, one vote" principle.
- **Readiness:** To ensure the electoral roll aligns with current demographic realities and is ready for smooth polling operations ahead of major assembly or general elections.

➤ Legal and Constitutional Basis:

- **Constitutional Mandate:** Article 324 of the Indian Constitution vests the ECI with the power of superintendence, direction, and control over the preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of elections.

- **Statutory Power:** Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, empowers the ECI to order a special revision of the electoral roll in any manner it deems fit.
- **Legal Precedent:** The Supreme Court has upheld the ECI's broad powers under Article 324 to ensure free and fair elections when existing laws are silent on specific issues.

➤ **The Process:**

- **House-to-House Verification:** The key feature is the extensive physical verification by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) who visit every household to distribute and collect pre-filled enumeration forms.
- **Document Submission:** Voters must fill in details and may need to provide supporting documents, especially if enrolled after the last intensive revision (e.g., 2003 in Bihar). This can include proof of date/place of birth and parentage to establish citizenship.
- **Online Options:** Electors can also fill and submit their forms and documents online via the ECI website or the ECINet app.
- **Draft Publication & Objections:** A draft roll is published for public review. Citizens and political parties can file claims for inclusion or objections regarding incorrect entries within a specified period.
- **Final Roll Publication:** After addressing all claims and objections, the final, updated electoral roll is published.

What is a Special Intensive Revision (SIR)?

A Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is a comprehensive, house-to-house verification drive conducted by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to cleanse and update electoral rolls. The objective is to ensure that electoral rolls are error-free and contain only the names of eligible Indian citizens who are at least 18 years old and are ordinary residents of the constituency.

The ECI has announced a nationwide rollout of the SIR, beginning with the state of Bihar in 2025 and followed by other states and union territories, including poll-bound regions.

Rationale for the SIR

The ECI mandates special intensive revisions to address issues that compromise the integrity of the electoral roll, such as:

1. Rapid urbanization
2. Frequent migration of voters
3. New voters becoming eligible
4. Failure to report deaths
5. Inclusion of ineligible voters

The SIR process

The process involves several stages and key participants:

- **House-to-house survey:** Booth Level Officers (BLOs) conduct field visits to verify the residency and eligibility of voters.
- **Form distribution:** Enumeration Forms (EFs) are distributed door-to-door, and online submission is also enabled for residents to verify and update their information.
- **Required documents:** Voters registered after a specific date must provide documentary evidence to validate their registration. In October 2025, the Supreme Court asked the ECI to include Aadhaar as a permissible document for proof of identity.

- **Political party involvement:** Political parties are encouraged to participate by appointing Booth Level Agents (BLAs) to help resolve discrepancies at an early stage.
- **Appeals and grievances:** A process is in place for electors or political parties to raise claims and objections, with the option to appeal to senior election officials.

What is the objective of Special Intensive Revision (SIR)?

The primary objective of a Special Intensive Revision (SIR), as directed by the Election Commission of India (ECI), is to ensure the integrity of the electoral roll. This is achieved by systematically updating and purifying the voter list to ensure it is accurate and error-free for conducting free and fair elections.

Key objectives of the SIR process include:

- **Including all eligible citizens:** Ensuring that all Indian citizens who are 18 years of age or older and ordinarily reside in a constituency are enrolled.
- **Excluding ineligible individuals:** Preventing the inclusion of any person not legally qualified to vote. This includes addressing duplicate entries and removing names of illegal immigrants.
- **Removing deceased and shifted voters:** Eliminating the names of voters who are deceased, have moved to a different location, or are permanently absent from their registered address.
- **Increasing transparency:** Introducing full transparency in the process of adding or deleting names by involving political parties and the public.
- **Conducting house to house verification:** Utilizing Booth Level Officers (BLOs) to conduct physical surveys and verify the details of electors.
- **Ensuring constitutional compliance:** Scrupulously adhering to the eligibility and disqualification provisions for voters as outlined in the Constitution of India and the Representation of the People Act, 1950.
- **Facilitating vulnerable electors:** Providing assistance to genuine electors, especially vulnerable groups such as the old, sick, or persons with disabilities, to ensure they are not inconvenienced.

How is Special Intensive Revision (SIR) conducted?

A Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is a comprehensive, house-to-house verification process of electoral rolls conducted by the Election Commission of India (ECI). The procedure involves Booth Level Officers (BLOs) physically visiting homes to verify voter details and update the rolls to ensure accuracy and transparency.

The purpose of the SIR is to:

- Include all eligible citizens who may have been missed.
- Delete the names of deceased, shifted, or ineligible voters.
- Clean up and "purify" the electoral rolls ahead of elections.

Steps for conducting a Special Intensive Revision

- **Announcement of schedule:** The ECI issues a specific schedule and guidelines for the SIR exercise in a particular state or region.
- **Preparatory meetings:** The ECI holds meetings with Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) from all states and union territories to assess preparedness and provide directions.
- **Appointment of personnel:** The ECI ensures the appointment and training of field staff, including Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs).
- **Involvement of political parties:** Political parties are encouraged to participate by appointing Booth Level Agents (BLAs) to assist in the process and help resolve discrepancies early on.
- **House to house verification:** BLOs conduct door-to-door visits to verify voter information. In some cases, this has involved distributing and collecting enumeration forms from every household.
- **Submission of documents:** Voters are required to submit identity and residency documents to confirm their eligibility. To increase transparency, the ECI requires that these supporting documents be uploaded to its digital network.
- **Addressing special cases:** Special efforts are made to assist vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, sick, and persons with disabilities, to ensure their inclusion.

- **Draft roll publication:** After field verification, a draft electoral roll is prepared and made public. This is shared with political parties and published on the websites of electoral officers.
- **Claims and objections:** The public and political parties are given a period to submit claims for inclusion or raise objections against any entries in the draft roll.
- **Inquiry and resolution:** Claims and objections are investigated by electoral officials before the roll is finalised.
- **Appeals process:** A formal appeals process is available for citizens who are unsatisfied with the ERO's decision. They can appeal to the District Magistrate or Chief Electoral Officer.
- **Final roll publication:** After all claims and objections have been resolved, the final, updated electoral roll is published.

What is the legal basis for the ECI's authority to conduct a Special Intensive Revision?

The Election Commission of India's (ECI) authority to conduct a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is rooted in both the Constitution of India and the Representation of the People Act, 1950. This legal framework provides the ECI with the necessary power and discretion to maintain accurate and error-free electoral rolls.

Constitutional provision: Article 324

Article 324 of the Constitution vests the power of "superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls" in the ECI. The Supreme Court of India has held that this provision grants the ECI broad powers, acting as a "reservoir of powers" that the commission can draw upon to ensure free and fair elections. A Special Intensive Revision is conducted under the umbrella of these powers when the ECI determines that the integrity of the electoral rolls needs to be significantly enhanced.

Statutory basis: The Representation of the People Act, 1950

The Constitution's mandate is supplemented by the specific provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1950. Key sections that form the legal basis include:

- **Section 21:** Preparation and revision of electoral rolls: This section explicitly empowers the ECI to revise the electoral rolls. It provides the legal authority for carrying out the process, including intensive revisions, to ensure that the rolls are up-to-date and accurate.
- **Section 13B:** Electoral registration officers: This section stipulates that electoral rolls are to be prepared and revised by an Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) nominated by the ECI. This gives the ECI direct control over the officers responsible for carrying out the revision on the ground.
- **Section 16:** Disqualifications for registration: In conjunction with Article 326 of the Constitution, this section lays down the legal provisions for disqualification from being registered as a voter. Adherence to these rules is a key aspect of an intensive revision, allowing the ECI to remove ineligible voters from the rolls.

The ECI's discretionary power

The decision to conduct a special intensive revision, as opposed to a regular summary revision, is left to the ECI's discretion. The commission has asserted its "exclusive jurisdiction" over this matter, and its decision depends on specific situations that necessitate a more thorough, house-to-house verification. Reasons for ordering an SIR often include:

- Rapid urbanization or large-scale migration.
- The need to include new, eligible young voters.
- The removal of duplicate, dead, or shifted voters.

The ECI's interpretation of its powers has been affirmed by the Supreme Court, which has acknowledged the commission's authority to use its discretion to ensure the integrity of the electoral process.

What are the main objectives of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) from a legal perspective?

From a legal perspective, the main objectives of a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) are to ensure the integrity, accuracy, and inclusiveness of the electoral rolls. This intensive, house-to-house verification is carried out by the Election Commission of India (ECI) under the authority of Article 324 of the Constitution and Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950. The legal objectives include the following:

Ensure inclusion of all eligible citizens

- A primary goal is to ensure that all citizens eligible to vote, based on factors such as age and citizenship, are included in the electoral roll.
- Booth Level Officers (BLOs) conduct door-to-door surveys during the SIR to verify and enroll all qualified citizens.
- The ECI's authority for this comes from Article 326 of the Constitution, which establishes the eligibility conditions for being a registered voter.

Eliminate ineligible or fraudulent voters

- The SIR aims to remove the names of ineligible voters from the electoral rolls, which is crucial for maintaining the integrity of elections.
- Reasons for ineligibility include being a foreign illegal immigrant, as highlighted by the ECI.
- This also includes deleting the names of deceased, shifted, or absentee voters.

Enhance transparency

- The process incorporates measures to make the addition and deletion of names more transparent.
- In one recent SIR, the ECI mandated that documents used to verify an elector's eligibility be uploaded to a secure system, accessible to authorized officials, for review and transparency.
- Political parties are also encouraged to participate in the process by appointing Booth Level Agents (BLAs) to help resolve discrepancies early on.

Safeguard genuine electors

- Legally, the ECI must ensure that the revision process does not harass or disenfranchise genuine, eligible voters.
- Special attention is directed towards facilitating the registration of vulnerable groups, such as the old, sick, or poor, to ensure their rights are protected.

Does the ECI have the exclusive power to decide when a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) should be conducted?

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has the exclusive power to decide when a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls should be conducted. The ECI asserts that this is part of its exclusive jurisdiction, and its power to decide the timing and nature of such a revision depends on the specific situation.

Key legal and constitutional provisions affirming ECI's authority

- **Article 324 of the Constitution:** This article gives the ECI the power of "superintendence, direction and control" of the electoral process.
- **Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950:** This law explicitly states that the ECI can direct a special revision of electoral rolls for any constituency at any time, with reasons recorded.
- **Supreme Court affirmation:** The ECI has informed the Supreme Court that the discretion to conduct a summary or intensive revision of the electoral rolls rests solely with the ECI, to the exclusion of any other authority.

While the ECI has the sole discretion on when to conduct a SIR, the process itself is implemented through a collaborative structure:

- **Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs):** At the state level, the election work is supervised by the CEO, who is appointed by the ECI.
- **District Election Officers (DEOs) and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs):** These officials, assisted by Booth Level Officers (BLOs), carry out the intensive revision activities at the district and constituency levels.

What was the legal controversy surrounding the 2025 Bihar Special Intensive Revision (SIR)?

The legal controversy surrounding the 2025 Bihar Special Intensive Revision (SIR) centers on allegations of widespread voter disenfranchisement and irregularities during the revision of electoral rolls. Critics, including opposition parties and civil society groups, alleged that the process was discriminatory and lacked transparency. These claims led to petitions being filed in the Supreme Court, which heard the matter in the months leading up to the state assembly elections in November 2025.

Key allegations by critics

- **Mass voter exclusion:** Activist Yogendra Yadav alleged that the exercise led to the unprecedented exclusion of lakhs of voters, with one estimate citing a reduction of 47 lakh voters from the state's population.
- **Disproportionate impact on marginalized groups:** It was argued that the process disproportionately affected marginalized communities, including migrant labourers and women, who faced difficulty providing the required documents.
- **Reduced gender ratio:** A significant drop in the female-to-male voter ratio was cited as evidence of wrongful deletions.
- **Flawed process and data:** Concerns were raised about flawed procedures and data inconsistencies. Reports surfaced of gibberish names, blank entries, and duplicate entries in the updated rolls.
- **Lack of transparency:** The ECI was criticized for not providing publicly available, machine-readable lists of deleted and added voters, raising transparency concerns.
- **Shifted burden of proof:** The ECI's approach was seen as shifting the burden of proof of eligibility onto existing voters rather than verifying their status, a practice that contradicts legal precedent.

Supreme Court involvement

The Supreme Court heard petitions challenging the SIR process, but did not question the ECI's authority to conduct the revision. In its hearings, the court issued several key directions:

- It ordered the ECI to be more transparent, including releasing the final voter lists in a searchable format.
- The court also directed that Aadhaar be included as an additional document for identity verification, although it cannot be the sole basis for deletion.
- It also instructed the Bihar State Legal Services Authority to assist excluded voters in filing appeals.

Political and electoral fallout

The controversy led to a political row in Bihar, with the opposition arguing that the SIR was a deliberate attempt to suppress votes and manipulate the upcoming election. The integrity of the voter lists and the potential for disenfranchisement became major points of contention in the lead-up to the polls.

What were the petitioners' main arguments in Bihar Special Intensive Revision (SIR)?

The main arguments of the petitioners challenging Bihar's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in the Supreme Court centered on the potential for mass disenfranchisement, particularly affecting migrants and marginalized groups. The petitioners argued that the process was opaque, rushed, and violated voters' rights to adult suffrage, equality, and dignity.

Prominent petitioners include the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), represented by Prashant Bhushan, and activist Yogendra Yadav.

Primary arguments

- **Mass disenfranchisement under the guise of revision:** Petitioners argued that the SIR exercise, rather than being a routine revision, was effectively a new voter list preparation (*de novo*). They cited the unprecedented exclusion of lakhs of voters, with Yadav noting a 47-lakh reduction in Bihar's voter population, a widened gender gap, and numerous statistical errors.
- **Discrimination against migrant workers:** The Election Commission of India's (ECI) strict definition of "ordinary residents" raised major concerns for Bihar's large migrant population. With the revision happening within a short period, it was argued that migrant workers would not be able to return for in-person verification, leading to their names being struck from the rolls despite their intention to return.
- **Procedural violations:** The petitions stated that the SIR violated provisions of the Representation of People's Act, 1950 and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. The ADR petition argued that a summary revision had already been completed in early 2025, making such a drastic, time-bound exercise unnecessary and prejudicial in the poll-bound state.

- **Systemic exclusion of marginalised groups:** Critics pointed out that the burden of re-verification and producing specific documents falls disproportionately on marginalized and impoverished citizens who may lack the necessary paperwork. This effectively creates a voter list that is less inclusive rather than more accurate.
- **Lack of transparency:** Petitioners highlighted the ECI's failure to publicly disclose disaggregated data and details of the deletions. They contended that publishing this information online is necessary for accountability and to give deleted voters a meaningful chance to appeal.
- **Flawed and outdated verification methods:** Some activists and experts criticized the reliance on cumbersome Standard Operating Procedures and Booth Level Officers (BLOs) to carry out the complex task, rather than implementing modern, technology-driven reforms.
- **Questioning the documents:** While the Supreme Court later pushed for the acceptance of Aadhaar and other documents, the petitioners initially raised concerns about the limited and strict verification criteria. This could have excluded people based on documents they were unable to provide.

What did the Supreme Court say and direct in Bihar Special Intensive Revision (SIR)?

The Supreme Court issued key directives regarding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Bihar's electoral rolls, aimed at ensuring transparency and inclusivity in the process. The directives came after petitions were filed by various political parties and civil society groups, which raised concerns about mass deletions and procedural flaws.

Key directives from the Supreme Court

- **Transparency and publication of deleted names:** On August 14, 2025, the court directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) to publish a complete, booth-wise list of the 65 lakh voters who were excluded from the draft electoral roll. The list had to include individual reasons for each exclusion, such as death, migration, or duplication. This information was to be widely publicized on the websites of District Level Election Officers and through television, print, and radio.

- **Acceptance of Aadhaar:** The court directed the ECI to accept Aadhaar cards as a valid identity document for voters to file claims and objections. This was a significant intervention, as the ECI's initial list of 11 acceptable documents for the SIR had excluded Aadhaar.
- **Assistance for deleted voters:** The court directed the Bihar Legal Services Authority to activate paralegal volunteers in every district to help individuals and political parties submit claims and objections. It also urged political parties to instruct their Booth Level Agents (BLAs) to assist voters.
- **Extension of deadlines and online options:** In response to petitions and the ongoing Bihar floods, the court pressed the ECI to consider extending the deadline for filing claims and objections. It also ordered the ECI to allow voters to submit their forms online, in addition to the physical option.
- **Judicial warning on future exercises:** While hearing the case, the court cautioned the ECI to learn from the Bihar experience and not repeat the same errors when conducting a similar pan-India SIR.

Court's perspective and rationale

The court's rulings were based on the principle that the right to vote is a constitutional entitlement that should not be dependent on the convenience of officials or political agents. Key points from the court's proceedings include:

- **Upholding voter rights:** The court noted that a high degree of transparency is essential to inspire voter confidence and protect against disenfranchisement.
- **Questioning the ECI's discretion:** Though the court recognized the ECI's authority to conduct special revisions under Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, it emphasized that this discretion must be exercised reasonably and with procedural safeguards.
- **Addressing ground-level failures:** The court highlighted the ECI's initial failure to provide proper communication to voters facing deletion and to properly publicize the list of excluded voters.
- **Affirming the legality of the SIR:** While addressing the procedural issues, the court upheld the ECI's power to conduct the intensive revision, rejecting arguments that the exercise lacked a legal basis.

What was the outcome of the Bihar Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise following the Supreme Court's intervention?

The Election Commission of India (ECI) completed the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Bihar's electoral rolls in September 2025, culminating in a final voter list with approximately 7.42 crore voters. The Supreme Court's intervention forced the ECI to increase transparency and make key procedural changes, but controversies and legal challenges persisted over the large number of voter deletions.

Supreme Court's directives

Following petitions filed by NGOs and activists, the Supreme Court heard challenges against the ECI's SIR process, voicing concerns about mass exclusions and the potential for disenfranchisement. The court did not halt the exercise but made crucial interventions.

- **Expanded accepted documents:** The Supreme Court directed the ECI to accept Aadhaar cards as a valid identity document for voters seeking to register or file objections. This addressed concerns that the initial list of 11 accepted documents was not universally available, putting vulnerable groups at a disadvantage.
- **Transparency mandate:** On August 14, 2025, the court ordered the ECI to publish a booth-wise list of all excluded voters, detailing the specific reasons for their removal (such as death, migration, or duplication). This was in response to a lack of transparency that made it difficult for civil society to scrutinize the deletions.
- **Ongoing oversight:** The court scheduled further hearings, including one for November 4, 2025, to continue monitoring the situation and address remaining concerns about the deletions and discrepancies in the electoral rolls.

Final outcome and remaining issues

The final electoral roll was published on September 30, 2025, but the process remained contentious.

- **Voter data:** A draft list showed the removal of 65 lakh electors, though 21.53 lakh eligible voters were added via Form 6 applications. After scrutiny, the final count of ineligible electors removed from the draft roll was 3.66 lakh.
- **Allegations of mass deletion:** Despite the ECI's claims of "purifying" the rolls, critics allege that the process led to the deletion of millions of voters with minimal scrutiny, potentially affecting marginalized communities and migrant workers.

- **Political controversy:** Opposition parties, including the RJD and Congress, accused the ECI of orchestrating the deletions to favour the ruling party in the upcoming state elections, particularly by targeting migrant labourers who might be working outside Bihar.
- **Limited impact of intervention:** Some observers argue that while the Supreme Court's directives increased transparency, they had a limited practical effect, as the burden of proof for wrongful deletion remained heavily on individual citizens.
- **Nationwide SIR on the anvil:** The ECI is proceeding with a nationwide SIR, and experts are monitoring whether the lessons and issues from the Bihar exercise will lead to procedural changes in other states.

What is the status of the pan-India Special Intensive Revision (SIR)?

The pan-India Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is a large-scale, comprehensive exercise by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to verify, update, and correct the entire electoral rolls across the country. This house-to-house verification drive by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) aims to ensure an accurate, inclusive voter list, free from errors like duplicates, deceased voters, or ineligible entries.

Process and Phases

The ECI is conducting the pan-India SIR in phases. Phase II, which began in November 2025, covers approximately 51 crore voters in 9 States and 3 Union Territories. The timeline for Phase II includes a period for house-to-house enumeration, publication of draft rolls, claims and objections, and publication of final rolls in February 2026.

Voter Action

BLOs distribute forms during enumeration. Voters can check details and application status online or through the ECINet App, and assistance is available via helpline 1950.

How does the SIR differ from the annual summary revision?

The annual revision is a routine maintenance process with no door-to-door verification. The SIR is a much more detailed, ground-up exercise involving mandatory house-to-house enumeration and extensive document verification of all registered voters.

What are the main stages of the SIR process?

- **House-to-house enumeration:** Booth Level Officers (BLOs) visit every house to distribute and collect pre-filled enumeration forms.
- **Document submission and verification:** Voters submit forms with required documents to prove their eligibility.
- **Publication of Draft Rolls:** A draft electoral roll is published for public review.
- **Claims and Objections Period:** Citizens can file claims for inclusion or raise objections regarding inaccuracies (e.g., deletion of a genuine voter or inclusion of an ineligible name).
- **Verification and Final Publication:** Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) verify all claims and objections before the final electoral roll is published.

What forms are used during the SIR?

- **Form 6:** For new voter registration or inclusion of name after shifting to a new constituency.
- **Form 7:** For objecting to an inclusion or seeking deletion of a name.
- **Form 8:** For correction of particulars or replacement of a photograph.
- **Form 6A:** For enrollment of overseas electors.

What documents are required for verification?

Citizens need to provide valid identity and address proofs. A variety of documents are accepted, including:

- Aadhaar card
- PAN card
- Passport
- Birth Certificate
- Driving License
- Marksheet of class 10/8/5

The states and Union Territories currently covered under Phase II

The states and Union Territories currently covered under Phase II of the Election Commission of India's "pan-India Special Intensive Revision" (SIR) of electoral rolls are:

Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Union Territory)

- Chhattisgarh
- Goa
- Gujarat
- Kerala
- Lakshadweep (Union Territory)
- Madhya Pradesh
- Puducherry (Union Territory)
- Rajasthan
- Tamil Nadu
- Uttar Pradesh
- West Bengal

The first phase of the SIR process was conducted in the state of Bihar.

Key Dates for the Current Phase

The second phase of the pan-India SIR covers 12 states and Union Territories (including Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala).

- House-to-house verification: November 4 to December 4, 2025.
- Publication of draft electoral rolls: December 9, 2025.
- Period for filing claims and objections: December 9, 2025, to January 8, 2026.
- Final publication of electoral rolls: February 7, 2026.

Has the SIR been challenged in court?

Yes, the ECI's decision to conduct the SIR has been challenged in the Supreme Court, with petitioners raising concerns about the ECI's authority to conduct such a mass exercise and the potential for mass disenfranchisement. The Supreme Court has allowed the process to continue but emphasized the need for due process and transparency.

What is the "2003 cut-off" controversy?

Voters registered after 2003 are required to provide additional documentary proof of citizenship and parentage. This has been a point of contention, with civil society organizations expressing concerns that it could lead to the exclusion of genuine, eligible voters, particularly from marginalized communities.

How is technology being used in the current Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process?

The current Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process utilizes several technological tools to enhance accuracy and efficiency, marking a shift from historical reliance solely on manual checks. Key technologies being used include artificial intelligence (AI) for duplicate detection, the ECINET platform for real-time data integration, online portals, and mobile apps for data collection and submission.

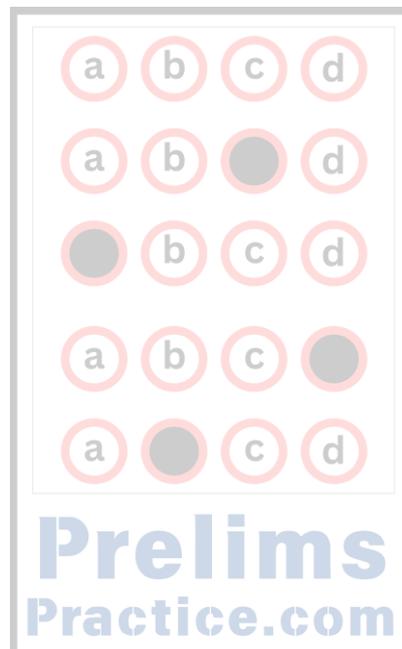
Key Technological Tools

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Facial Recognition:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) is deploying AI-powered tools and facial recognition technology, particularly in states like West Bengal, to identify duplicate voters, detect fraudulent entries, and flag inconsistencies by analysing photographs across the database. This helps in weeding out fake or deceased voters.
- **ECINET Platform:** This digital network integrates over 40 electoral tools, allowing for real-time data updates, flagging inconsistencies, and generating transparent statistical reports. It is central to the data management and cross-verification process.
- **Online Portals and Mobile Apps:**
 - Voters can use the ECI Voter Portal or state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) websites to submit their enumeration forms and supporting documents online.
 - Booth Level Officers (BLOs) are equipped to digitize the forms collected during house-to-house verification into the system.
 - Mobile apps are also used for enumeration, GIS mapping of premises, and online grievance portals to streamline the process for both citizens and officials.
- **Data Digitisation:** A massive effort is underway to digitize the physical enumeration forms collected from households, enabling electronic data processing and verification.
- **SMS Alerts:** Digital tools include SMS alerts to keep voters informed about the process and deadlines.
- **Potential Biometrics and Blockchain:** While the primary focus is on the current tools, past pilots, such as in Bihar's municipal polls, have explored the use of blockchain, biometric scanning, and facial recognition for secure e-voting, offering potential lessons for future enhancements in the SIR process.

How Technology is Used

- **Duplicate and Error Detection:** Technology facilitates the software-led identification of anomalies, duplicates, and demographic inconsistencies that were previously reliant on manual cross-checks.

- **Efficient Data Management:** The digitisation of vast amounts of data allows for quicker processing, integration, and management of voter information across different constituencies.
- **Accessibility and Transparency:** Online portals offer citizens a convenient way to participate, reducing queues and providing a digital audit trail. Draft rolls are also published online for public review and the submission of claims/objections.
- **Field Officer Support:** BLOs use technology for real-time data entry and monitoring, improving the efficiency of the house-to-house verification process.



Practice Questions

1. With reference to the "Special Intensive Revision (SIR)" of electoral rolls recently conducted by the Election Commission of India (ECI), consider the following statements:

- I. It is a process conducted under Article 324 of the Constitution and Section 21 of the Representation of the People (RP) Act, 1950.
- II. It involves a comprehensive house-to-house enumeration and verification by Booth Level Officers (BLOs).
- III. The ECI has the authority to determine the specific documents required as proof of citizenship during this revision process.
- IV. The Supreme Court, in the Lal Babu Hussein case (1995), held that once a person's name is on the electoral roll, it is presumed valid and cannot be removed without due process.

How many of the above statements are correct?

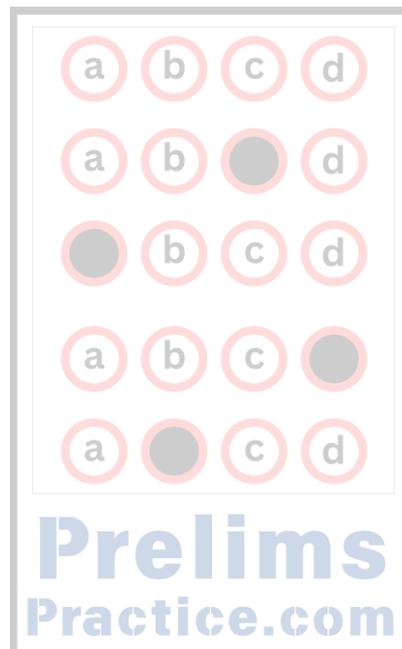
- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) Only three
- d) All four

Answer: c

Explanation: **Statement I is correct:** The SIR is legally backed by Article 324, which empowers the ECI to supervise elections, and Section 21 of the RP Act, 1950, which deals with the preparation and revision of electoral rolls. **Statement II is correct:** A core methodology of the SIR is the house-to-house verification process to ensure accuracy and inclusion of eligible voters. **Statement III is incorrect:** The authority to determine documents proving Indian citizenship rests with the Ministry of Home Affairs, not the Election Commission of India. **Statement IV is correct:** The Supreme Court ruling emphasizes that names on the voter list are presumed valid and arbitrary deletion is unconstitutional, highlighting the need for due process.

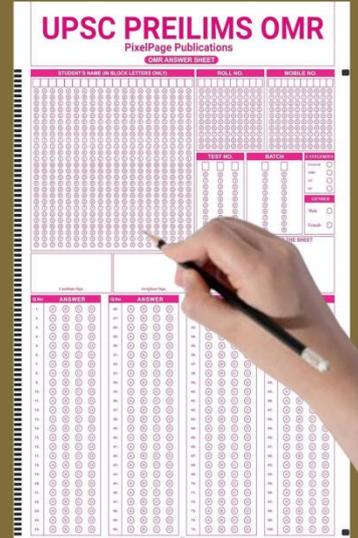
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