



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Electons

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SPECIAL INTENSIVE REVISION OF ELECTORAL ROLL

What is special intensive revision of electoral rolls?

A Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is a comprehensive and time-bound process undertaken by the **Election Commission of India (ECI) to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the voter list**. It differs from regular summary revisions, which are annual updates where citizens can apply for changes, deletions, or additions.

key features and purposes of a Special Intensive Revision include:

1House-to-House Verification

2Inclusion of Eligible Voters and Deletion of Ineligible Voters

3Responding to Major Demographic Changes

4Ensuring Transparency

5Legal Basis: The ECI is empowered to conduct a SIR under Article 324 of the Constitution and Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950

TYPES OF REVISION OF ELECTORAL ROLLS

SUMMARY REVISION: A Summary Revision is the standard and periodic process of updating the electoral rolls conducted by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

SPECIAL INTENSIVE REVISION: Special Intensive Revision (SIR), which is a comprehensive, time-bound, house-to-house verification, a summary revision is a more routine and applicant-driven process.

Rationale behind / need for SIR??

Corrects Cumulative Errors: Over time, annual revisions may miss errors. A SIR provides a full-scale opportunity to correct these accumulated mistakes.

Removes Deceased Voters: It systematically identifies and removes the names of deceased individuals, preventing potential misuse of their votes.

Eliminates Duplicate Entries: A house-to-house check is highly effective at finding and deleting names of voters registered in multiple locations.

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Includes Eligible New Voters: It proactively enrolls all eligible citizens, particularly those who have recently reached the age of 18, ensuring no one is left out.

Accounts for Migration: It updates the rolls to reflect changes in residence due to migration, a common cause of outdated entries.

Enhances Public Trust: The thorough, transparent process assures citizens and political parties that the voter list is fair and accurate.

Supports Democratic Legitimacy: By ensuring the principle of "one person, one vote," it underpins the credibility of the entire electoral process.

Prepares for Upcoming Elections: A clean, updated electoral roll is essential for a smooth and fair election. A SIR is often a preparatory step.

Engages Political Parties: It involves political parties and their agents, fostering a collaborative approach to electoral roll management and dispute resolution.

Ensures Data Integrity: The detailed verification process ensures that the electoral roll data is current, complete, and accurate, which is vital for planning and conducting elections effectively.

Concerns associated with SIR :

Voter Disenfranchisement

The most significant concern is the potential for disenfranchisement of genuine, eligible voters. The stringent and often unfamiliar documentation requirements of a SIR can be challenging for a large section of the population, especially the poor, illiterate, homeless, or migrant workers.

Allegations of Political Bias

A SIR can become a point of political controversy, with opposition parties often alleging political manipulation or selective targeting.

Administrative Capacity and Burden

The sheer scale of a house-to-house verification drive places an enormous administrative burden on the election machinery.

Lack of Transparency

The implementation of a SIR can be criticized for a lack of transparency. Issues arise when political parties and the public are not given timely access to information about the process, such as the criteria for deletion or the specific data that is being verified.

Documentation Challenges

The requirement for specific documents, such as birth certificates, can be a major hurdle. For many citizens, especially older individuals in rural areas, such documents may not exist. This creates an access-to-justice issue.

Time Constraints

The compressed timeframe of a SIR, especially when conducted close to an election, is a major concern. The short window for claims and objections puts immense pressure on voters to check their status and rectify any errors.

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Judicial Overreach

A SIR can also lead to legal challenges, drawing the judiciary into a domain traditionally reserved for the Election Commission. This can create a conflict between the ECI's constitutional mandate to conduct elections and the judiciary's role in protecting fundamental rights, leading to delays and uncertainty in the electoral process.

How to strengthen the SIR process without questioning the transparency and accuracy issues?

Robust Public Awareness and Communication

The Election Commission of India (ECI) should launch a large-scale, multi-lingual public awareness campaign well in advance of the SIR. This campaign should clearly explain the purpose, timeline, and procedures of the revision

Leveraging Technology for Data Management

Technology can be a game-changer. The ECI should use modern tools to cross-verify data and detect anomalies. Implementing AI-powered anomaly detection systems can flag suspicious deletions or additions, such as a large number of removals in a specific locality, which can then be investigated.

Political Consensus and Bipartisan Oversight

The ECI should actively engage with all political parties at every stage of the SIR process. This includes holding regular meetings to inform them about the procedures, sharing draft rolls and weekly lists of claims and objections, and encouraging them to appoint their Booth-Level Agents (BLAs).

Judicial oversight by the special tribunals and clear guidelines for Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) are essential to uphold constitutional safeguards and prevent arbitrary voter exclusions.

Inclusivity Measures

Organize special camps for marginalized groups (e.g., disabled, and tribals), provide multilingual helplines, and conduct post-revision sample surveys to ensure accurate enrollment and minimize exclusions.

Conclusion:

A Special Intensive Revision is a crucial exercise to safeguard democratic legitimacy by upholding the principle of "one person, one vote" and maintaining public trust in the electoral system.