

PrepAlpine

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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS DATED 12.04.2026

GS Paper II: Current Affairs

1. Special Intensive Revision in West Bengal: Electoral Cleansing or Risk of Exclusion?

a. Introduction

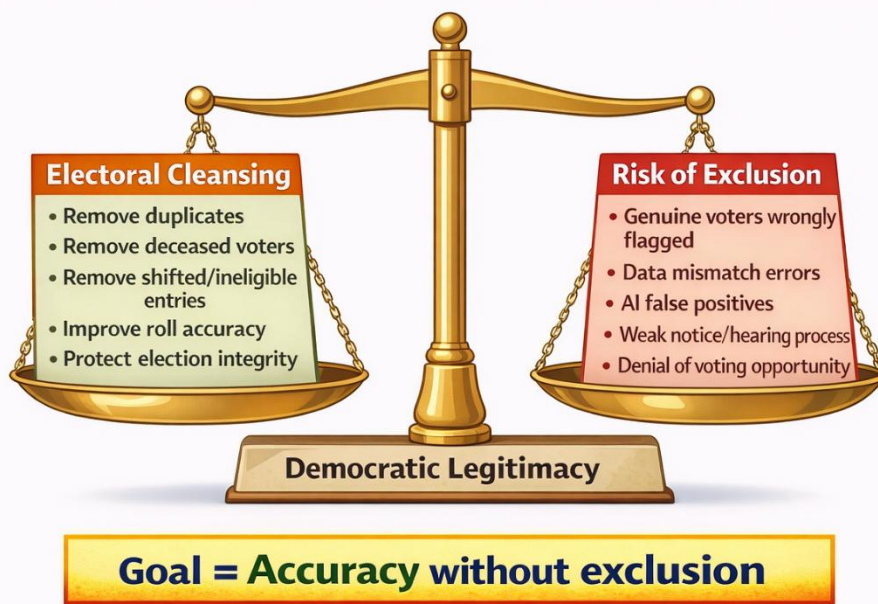
The controversy over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in West Bengal highlights a critical issue in Indian democracy: how to balance electoral accuracy with voter inclusion.

At one level, SIR is a routine administrative exercise to clean voter lists by removing:

- duplicate names
- deceased voters
- shifted or ineligible entries

However, in West Bengal, the scale of deletions and disputed criteria transformed it into a major constitutional and political debate. The Supreme Court's involvement further underlined that this was not just an administrative issue, but one affecting voting rights and democratic trust.

Special Intensive Revision (SIR): Electoral Cleansing vs Risk of Exclusion



b. What is Special Intensive Revision (SIR)?

SIR is a comprehensive revision of electoral rolls conducted by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Purpose of SIR

- Ensure accuracy of voter lists
- Remove:
 - Duplicates
 - migrated voters
 - deceased individuals
- Maintain what ECI calls a “healthy electoral roll”

Legal Basis

- Rooted in the Representation of the People Act, 1950
- Essential for ensuring free and fair elections

Thus, in principle, SIR is necessary and legitimate.

c. Why did the West Bengal SIR become controversial?

The controversy emerged due to the massive scale and uncertainty involved.

Scale of Deletions

- Electorate reduced from about 7.66 crore to 6.77 crore
- Nearly 89 lakh names removed

High Volume of Uncertainty

- Over 60 lakh names under adjudication at one stage

Key Concern

- Difficulty in distinguishing between:
 - removal of fake voters
 - exclusion of genuine voters

This turned a routine revision into a question of fairness and trust.

d. How were names identified for scrutiny?

The process involved both traditional methods and technological tools.

Standard Grounds

- Absent
- Shifted
- Dead
- Duplicate

Technology-Based Identification

- Use of ERONET platform
- AI used for:
 - photo similarity
 - demographic similarity

Core Issue

- Technology is meant to flag potential errors
- But controversy arose when such flags were treated as grounds for deletion

e. Why is the “logical discrepancy” category problematic?

This category became the most disputed aspect of the SIR.

Legal and Conceptual Issues

- Questioned by the Supreme Court
- Lack of clear legal basis

Practical Problems in Indian Context

- Common realities:
 - spelling variations
 - age inaccuracies
 - incomplete records
- These may create false mismatches

Risk

Genuine voters may be:

- wrongly flagged
- unfairly excluded

Ordinary data inconsistencies should not become grounds for exclusion.

f. The Issue of “Unmapped” Voters

“Unmapped” refers to voters whose records could not be linked to earlier rolls.

Nature of the Problem

- Non-linkage with previous data e.g., 2002 roll

Why this is problematic

- Migration
- clerical errors
- data gaps

These can make genuine voters appear “unmapped”.

g. Why did the Supreme Court intervene?

The Supreme Court played a crucial role in ensuring procedural fairness.

Reasons for Intervention

- Large-scale disputes
- Alleged lack of fairness
- “Trust deficit” between stakeholders

Key Measures Ordered

Deployment of:

- district judges
- additional judicial officers

Formation of:

- multi-member panels
- structured appeal systems

Significance

Indicates that normal administrative mechanisms were insufficient

h. What happened after adjudication?

The final outcomes revealed important democratic concerns.

Final Data

- Around 27 lakh names deleted after adjudication
- Total electorate significantly reduced

Critical Problem

Once electoral rolls are frozen, deleted voters:

- cannot be re-added in time

i. Larger Constitutional Issues Involved

Electoral Integrity

- Clean rolls are essential
- Prevents fraud and duplication

Democratic Inclusion

- Voting depends on inclusion in rolls
- Wrongful deletion results in democratic exclusion

Due Process

Need for:

- proper notice
- fair hearing
- clear reasons
- effective appeal

Institutional Trust

- ECI's credibility depends on:
 - Neutrality
 - public confidence
- Trust deficit weakens democracy

Technology and Accountability

AI can assist, but not replace:

- human judgment
- legal safeguards

Technology must remain a tool, not a decision-maker

j. Political and Social Dimensions

Competing Narratives

Supporters:

- see SIR as electoral cleansing

Critics:

- see risk of voter exclusion

Social Concerns

Allegations of disproportionate impact in:

- minority-heavy areas

ECI response:

- denies targeting
- refers to Article 325 (no religious exclusion)

Key Insight

Electoral fairness must be:

- real
- and also perceived as fair

k. Core Conceptual Tension: Cleansing vs Exclusion

The debate can be reduced to a fundamental democratic balance:

Electoral Cleansing

- Remove fake or duplicate voters
- Protect election integrity

Risk of Exclusion

Data errors may:

- wrongly remove genuine voters

Required Balance

- Accuracy without arbitrariness
- Speed without injustice
- Technology without opacity
- Vigilance without exclusion

This balance defines the maturity of a democracy.

1. Way Forward

Clear Criteria

- Transparent and legally defined rules for deletion

Limited Role of Technology

- AI only for screening, not final decisions

Strengthening Due Process

- Proper notice
- reasonable time
- accessible appeals

Independent Audits

Check for:

- bias

- false positives

Timely Completion

- Finish revisions well before elections

Protecting Vulnerable Groups

Special care for:

- migrants
- minorities
- poor and women

Ensure no genuine voter is excluded due to systemic weaknesses

Conclusion

The West Bengal SIR controversy shows that electoral reform is not just technical—it is deeply constitutional and democratic.

A democracy certainly needs clean voter rolls, but it equally needs:

- fairness
- transparency
- trust

The real test is not just removing ineligible names, but ensuring that: every eligible citizen can vote without fear of arbitrary exclusion.

Thus, the credibility of elections depends on achieving a careful balance between integrity and inclusion, which lies at the heart of democratic governance.

Reader's Note — About This Current Affairs Compilation

Dear Aspirant,

This document is part of the PrepAlpine Current Affairs Series — designed to bring clarity, structure, and precision to your daily UPSC learning.

While every effort has been made to balance depth with brevity, please keep the following in mind:

1. Orientation & Purpose

This compilation is curated primarily from the UPSC Mains perspective — with emphasis on conceptual clarity, analytical depth, and interlinkages across GS papers.

However, the PrepAlpine team is simultaneously developing a dedicated Prelims-focused Current Affairs Series, designed for:

- factual coverage
- data recall
- Prelims-style MCQs
- objective pattern analysis

This Prelims Edition will be released separately as a standalone publication.

2. Content Length

Some sections may feel shorter or longer depending on topic relevance and news density. To fit your personal preference, you may freely resize or summarize sections using any LLM tool (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.) at your convenience.

3. Format Flexibility

The formatting combines:

- paragraphs
- lists
- tables
- visual cues

—all optimised for retention.

If you prefer a specific style (lists → paras, paras → tables, etc.), feel free to convert using any free LLM.

4. Monthly Current Affairs Release

The complete Monthly Current Affairs Module will be released soon, optimized to a compact 100–150 pages — comprehensive yet concise, exam-ready, and revision-efficient.

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