



**THE S.I.R.-RELATED ACTIVITIES-2025-26: A BRIEF REVIEW, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE CONDITION(S) IN WEST BENGAL**

Dr. Sreeparna Chattopadhyay 

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**



**Author Details:**

I.C.S.S.R. Postdoctoral Fellow,  
Department of Political Science,  
Raiganj University, Raiganj,  
Uttar Dinajpur, West Bengal, India

**Corresponding Author:**

Dr. Sreeparna Chattopadhyay

**DOI:**

<https://doi.org/10.70096/tssr.260402014>

**Abstract**

If (the) conduction of the general elections constitutes a democratic country's greatest and most intense politico-administrative exercise, the revision of electoral rolls, which tries to ensure an honest, smooth and impartial voting-process, is also equally important. In India, the wholesome revision (and updating) of voters' list(s) is usually referred to as the 'S.I.R.' or the 'Special Intensive Revision of Electoral Rolls'. In the present essay, an attempt has been made to review different aspects of the S.I.R., and to highlight the principal points of the S.I.R.-drive of 2025-26, with special reference to the situation in West Bengal.

**Keywords:** *Highlights, S.I.R., 2026, Aspects and Data, West Bengal*

Recently the Government of West Bengal seems to have been engaged in a (heated) exchange of words (which has resulted in politicians belonging to the *All India Trinamool Congress* or *A.I.T.C.* arranging a 'dharna' or 'sit-in-demonstration' in Kolkata as well) with the *Election Commission of India* (*E.C.I.*), currently headed by Gyanesh Kumar (b. 1964), over the issue of *S.I.R.* (or, the *Special Intensive Revision of Electoral Rolls*). The *S.I.R.*, in fact, is nothing new. Between 1952 and 2004, the *E.C.I.* conducted the *S.I.R.* thirteen times. However, the *S.I.R.*-exercise conducted by the *E.C.I.* in 2025-26 has generated a lot of controversies, especially in West Bengal, where – by early-March 2026 – (approximately) 150 people, including *Booth Level Officers* (*B.L.O.*), are alleged to have passed away, especially due to stress and anxiety arising out of non-enlistment of names and fear of performance of duties (Mathur).

Many (seemingly) ill-informed people have been directly linking the *S.I.R.* to (the initiation of the process of maintenance of) the *National Register of Citizens* (*N.R.C.*), which was mandated by the *Amendment of the (Indian) Citizenship Act, 1955*, and the (putting into practice the provisions of the) *Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019*, which was passed by the Parliament of India on 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2019. These suppositions have accentuated their anxieties and sufferings. The present essay proposes to enlist and review the basic aspects of the *S.I.R.* that took place/is happening in 2025-26, and examine its importance in the (Indian) democratic process.

One must understand, at the very beginning that the *S.I.R.* does not seem to be a process of 'terrorising the people', though the enormity of the process has taken a toll on the mental set-up of a section of Indians. It, rather, aims to ensure that all *bona fide* Indian citizens were/are enlisted in the *Electoral Rolls* (*E.R.*), and no ineligible voter is permitted to cast her/his vote. What is important is that as per rules laid down according to *Article 324* of the Constitution of India, and *Section 21 (3)* of the *Representation of the People Act, 1951*, the *E.C.I.* has secured the power to revise electoral rolls throughout any state in India without prior permission from any authority. This particular provision of 'autonomy' has led to the generation of controversies in different Indian states.

The first electoral roll began to be prepared in India in 1950, three years after the country became independent. In fact, it was then a country of (approximately) 361 million people, and, understandably, the first comprehensive electoral exercise – with an extremely limited infrastructure – was a herculean task. A newly-independent India had widespread illiteracy and mentionably diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, the first electoral officers registered over 173.2 million eligible voters, principally through house-to-house enumeration (Swargiary 33). It was made possible especially through the efficiency of Sukumar Sen (1898-1963), who was appointed the *Chief Election Commissioner of India* in the third week of March 1950. In April 1950, the Parliament passed the *Representation of the People Act, 1951*, and the first General Elections were conducted between 25 October 1951 and 21 February 1952.

Following the General Elections, the first *S.I.R.* was undertaken by the *E.C.I.* between 1952 and 1956. It was a huge and (so-called) 'intense' affair, and required both mentionable manpower and financial resources (in which the-then newly-independent nation was seriously and severely lacking)! This task, nevertheless, was, completed over the years (finally, in 1956), and this benefitted (approximately) 407 million Indians directly. This was principally through reduction of corrupt practices (by the-then political leaders) to retain power, and by including as many (if not all) eligible voters on the *eligible voters' list* (*E.V.L.*) as possible. The *E.C.I.*, during the 1952-56 period, had made it clear that the first *S.I.R.* aimed to achieve (principally) five objectives: (a) preparation of accurate electoral rolls; (b) guaranteeing inclusivity; (c) removal of ineligible voters; (d) prevention of election-related malpractices; and (e) updating (of) the electoral rolls to reflect (and assess) frequent population migration (see, for example, *The Primary...: Testbook*). This first *S.I.R.*, as already once mentioned, was a *de novo* (from scratch) preparation of the roll, involving house-to-house field verification by electoral registration officers. The staff, in thousands, typically included the *Electoral Registration Officers* (*E.R.O.s*), the *Assistant Electoral Registration Officers* (*A.E.R.O.s*), and large numbers of enumerators for door-to-door visitations. This structure of employment of the *S.I.R.*-related personnel has not changed a lot over the years, and even in 2025-26, it was/is pretty much the same.

The second *S.I.R.* was conducted – and completed – in early-1957, just ahead of the *General Elections to the Lok Sabha*, which were held from 24 February 1957 to 14 March 1957. In this, 120.5 million voters voted to elect 494 members of the *Lok Sabha*. The total population of India, at that time, was approximately 417 million, and the *S.I.R.*-related tasks, understandably, were completed following hundreds of challenges.

One could mention here that in West Bengal, the *S.I.R.* (completed in early-1957) found that out of the 21.9 million people who were supposed to be 'entitled to vote', 15.2 million were *eligible* electors (10.5 million ultimately cast their votes) (*Statistical 3*). The second *S.I.R.* had a very positive effect on the cash-strapped country because Sukumar Sen used the *S.I.R.*-data obtained to 'mercilessly' reduce the election-costs. In *India after Gandhi*, Ramachandra Guha estimates that Sen utilised the data obtained so deftly that the *Second General Elections* cost around Rs. 45 million less than the *First General Elections to the Lok Sabha* (Guha). This exercise was repeated, later, in the years 1961, 1965, 1966, 1983-84, 1987-89, 1992, 1993, 1995, 2002, 2003, and 2004, until the 2025-26 *S.I.R.*

It was ahead of the 2025 and 2026 *Assembly Elections* in various Indian states (especially West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry) that the *Election Commission of India*, which acts – to repeat – under the *Article 324* of the Indian Constitution and *Section 21(3)* of the *Representation of the People Act, 1950*, decided to undertake another *S.I.R.*-drive. As per the information made available by the Press Information Bureau, the 2025-26 *S.I.R.*-drive, like the previous ones:

[...] [has been necessitated by] [...] [v]arious reasons such as rapid urbanisation, frequent migration, young citizens becoming eligible to vote, non-reporting of deaths and inclusion of the names of foreign illegal immigrants [...].  
The *Booth Level Officers* (*B.L.O.s*) shall be conducting house-to-house survey for verification during the process of this intensive revision (*E.C.I. to begin...: P.I.B.*).

Bihar was one of the first Indian states to undergo the *S.I.R.* process which continued from 24 June 2025 to 30 September 2025. Following the publication of the final list of eligible voters, it was found that 74.2 million people of Bihar were eligible to vote in the 2025 *Assembly Elections*, and 0.3 million new voters had been added to the list (*Election Commission...: News on Air*). On the other hand, more than 0.65 million names of voters were deleted from the rolls, and the reasons for deletion included 'permanently shifted', 'deceased', 'not found', and 'duplicates'.

The *S.I.R.* exercise in Bihar signalled the immensity of the task. In the 38 districts of the state, 243 *E.R.O.s*, 2,976 *A.E.R.O.s*, 90,712 *Booth Level Officers*, and millions of volunteers and field representatives of all the 12 major political parties, and their 0.16 million *Booth Level Agents* were directly involved (see, for example, *Special Intensive...: P.I.B.*). It was repeatedly made clear to the people of Bihar that *S.I.R.* was not the same as *N.R.C.*-related works or the *C.A.A.*-related activities. While the *S.I.R.*, a routine *E.C.I.*-exercise to update electoral rolls, focuses only on the accuracy of voters' list, the *C.A.A.* and the *N.R.C.* are legislative frameworks for Indian citizenship. The *E.C.I.*, however, had made its concern clear to both the general citizens of the country and the journalists and reporters. It repeatedly cited concerns that a mentionable number of (so-called) 'voters' inhabiting some eastern and north-eastern states of the country were supposed to be 'illegal immigrants' from neighbouring countries who had 'obtained their *E.P.I.C.s* by furnishing dubious or deliberately-misleading documents'. Despite strong opposition from a number of major political parties from all across India, the *E.C.I.* went ahead – from 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2025 onwards – with the *Second Phase of the S.I.R.* across 9 states and 3 union territories of India. The exercise covered (approximately) 510 million (prospective) voters across 321 districts and 1,843 Assembly Constituencies.

The humongous exercise ultimately reached West Bengal as well. It was widely floated around that a significant number out of the (approximately) 100 million people of the state were 'settlers from the neighbouring countries'. According to the press-releases made available by the *Press Information Bureau* at various times, West Bengal, initially, had to appoint (approximately) 80,681 *B.L.O.s*, who, with more than 0.16 million *B.L.A.s*, had to complete house-to-house verification, distribution, and collection of forms across 294 Assembly Constituencies. Throughout the exercise, a total of around 0.5 million government-employees of the state got involved. In the later phase, 0.210 million *B.L.A.s* from 8 recognised political parties of West Bengal were involved in the process (*S.I.R...: The Hindu*). After the final voters' list was published in West Bengal in end-February 2026, it was found that 0.63 million names had been deleted from the voters' list. On the other hand, the names of around 0.182

million new voters had been added. Presently, 74.59 million people are eligible to vote in West Bengal, out of whom 36.22 million are male voters, 34.43 million are women-voters, and 1342 voters belong to the third-gender-category (Thakur).

The *S.I.R.*-related activities are still continuing in West Bengal, with the *E.C.I.* providing the non-enlisted voters time to challenge their exclusion, and find ways to get themselves enlisted as ‘regular’ and ‘eligible’ voters. However, with the *Elections to the Bidhan Sabha* round the corners, the *S.I.R.*-process in West Bengal has been facing accusations (and defence) from different political parties who are trying to imply that the deletion of voters’ name(s) might interfere with the *election prospects* of the ruling party in the state. It remains to be seen whether *S.I.R.*-related exercise of 2026 becomes one of the more major *E.C.I.*-supervised activities in independent India, or it becomes one of the more controversial ones.

**Acknowledgment:** No

**Author’s Contribution:** *Dr. Sreeparna Chattopadhyay:* Data Collection, Literature Review, Methodology, Analysis, Drafting, Referencing

**Funding:** No

**Declaration:** Not Applicable

**Competing Interest:** No

## References

1. “E.C.I. to begin *Special Intensive Revision* of Electoral Rolls in Bihar”. *Press Information Bureau* 24 June 2025. Accessed on 8 March 2026 <<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2139342&reg=3&lang=2>>
2. “Election Commission releases Final Voter List with 7.42 Crore Names for Bihar Assembly Elections”. *News on Air (Government of India)* 30 September 2025. Accessed on 8 March 2026 <<https://www.newsonair.gov.in/ec-releases-final-voter-list-for-bihar-assembly-elections/>>
3. Guha, Ramchandra. *India after Gandhi: The History of the World’s Largest Democracy* (e-book). 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New Delhi: Pan Macmillan, 2023.
4. Mathur, Aneasha. “150 People dead in Bengal due to *S.I.R.* Pressure: Mamata Banerjee to Supreme Court”. *M.S.N.–India Today* February 2026. Accessed on 7 March 2026 <<https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/India/150-people-dead-in-bengal-due-to-sir-pressure-mamata-banerjee-to-supreme-court/ar-AA1VDh58?apiverison=v2&domshim=1&noservercache=1&noservertelemetry=1&batchservertelemetry=1&renderwebcomponents=1&wcseo=1>>
5. “*S.I.R.*: More than 70 Lakh Forms distributed on the First Day of Enumeration Process in West Bengal”. *The Hindu (Online)* 5 November 2025. Accessed on 8 March 2026 <<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/west-bengal/sir-more-than-70-lakh-forms-distributed-on-first-day-of-enumeration-process-in-west-bengal/article70243115.ece>>
6. “*Special Intensive Revision* (S.I.R.) of Electoral Rolls in Bihar successfully completed”. *Press Information Bureau* 30 September 2025. Accessed on 8 March 2026 <<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2173316&reg=3&lang=2#:~:text=Figures%20are%20rounded%20to%20near,objective%20of%20identifying%20eligible%20voters>>
7. “Statistical Report on General Election, 1957, to the Legislative Assembly of West Bengal”. Election Commission of India (New Delhi): <https://share.google/T1xWrXkjUpWiEnui1>
8. Swargiary, Khritish. *Democracy in India: Evolution, Challenges, and Reforms (Before and After 2014)*. Vernon Hills: Era Publications, 2025.
9. Thakur, Joydeep. “West Bengal: 6.2 Million Names dropped from Post-*S.I.R.* Voter List”. *The Hindustan Times (Online)* 1 March 2026. Accessed on 8 March 2026 <<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/west-bengal-6-2-million-names-dropped-from-post-sir-voter-list-101772329481865.html>>
10. “The Primary Objective of the *Special Intensive Revision* (S.I.R.) conducted by the Election Commission of India”. *Testbook*. Accessed on 8 March 2026 <<https://testbook.com/question-answer/the-primary-objective-of-the-special-intensive-rev--6937db1577c119f0c0d8005f>>

## Publisher’s Note

*The Social Science Review A Multidisciplinary Journal* remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published data, map and institutional affiliations.

## ©The Author(s) 2026. Open Access.

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. If material is not included in the article’s Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>