

SC on Bihar Electoral Roll Revision

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Electoral Roll Revision Latest News

- The Supreme Court of India declined to stay the Election Commission of India's (ECI) **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls in Bihar, which is scheduled ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections.
- Amid concerns raised by petitioners over the timing and process of the electoral roll revision, the Court urged the ECI **to consider Aadhaar, voter ID, and ration cards for verification purposes** and scheduled a detailed hearing for July 28.

Background - Electoral Roll Revision in Bihar

- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR):** SIR involves a de novo/ afresh preparation of electoral rolls through house-to-house verification by electoral registration officers.
- **Applicability in Bihar:**
 - **Those listed on the 2003 electoral rolls** need only submit an extract from that roll.
 - **Those enrolled after 2003** must submit one or more of 11 prescribed documents and a pre-filled enumeration form to establish birthplace and date, **indirectly serving as a citizenship**

determination process.

Supreme Court Proceedings and Key Observations

- **Major concerns raised:**
 - **Timing of revision:**
 - Petitioners argued that the electoral roll revision is timed too close to the **November 2025 Bihar Assembly elections**.
 - Demanded delinking of the revision exercise from the election process.
 - **Document exclusion:**
 - Objection to exclusion of Aadhaar from the accepted list of identity/citizenship documents.
 - Concerns of **citizenship screening** under the guise of voter verification.
 - **Risk of voter disenfranchisement:**
 - Petitioners warned that lack of accepted documentation **could exclude genuine voters** (particularly marginalized groups like EBCs, Dalits, minorities, and women).
 - A Bihar government survey reportedly revealed most voters did not possess the required certificates sought by ECI.
- **Supreme Court's stand and directions:**
 - **No interim stay:** Court **allowed** ECI to proceed with SIR but **reserved right to intervene** if violations are proven.
 - **Document suggestion:** SC urged ECI to consider Aadhaar, voter ID, and ration cards—though left the final decision to the Commission.
 - **Rationale for transparency:** ECI was directed to provide reasons if it chooses to exclude these documents.
- **Three key legal questions identified by SC:**
 - Powers of the Election Commission under the Constitution.
 - Procedure and methodology of SIR being adopted.
 - Timing of the revision vis-à-vis the upcoming election.

Accessibility of Suggested Documents in Bihar

- **Aadhaar card:**
 - Aadhaar is available to over **88%** of Bihar's population (approx. 11.48 crore people).
 - Saturation level (eligible people with Aadhaar) stands at **94%** across the state.
 - Some districts like Kishanganj and Katihar show saturation above 120%, indicating **coverage exceeding projections**.
 - **Adult coverage (18+ years):** 70.29% of total Aadhaar holders.
- **Voter ID (EPIC card):**
 - Issued compulsorily to all enrolled electors.
 - **Bihar has 7.89 crore registered voters**, almost all of whom hold a Voter ID.
 - **Used presently only for identification**, not for eligibility verification.
- **Ration cards:**

- **Cover about two-thirds of Bihar's population.**
- 1.79 crore ration cards cover around 8.71 crore beneficiaries (as of July 10, 2025).
- Easily accessible to **low-income and marginalized groups**, including EBCs and minorities.

Election Commission's Position and Defence

- **Key submissions by ECI:**

- The list of 11 documents is not exhaustive, and room for additions exists.
- **Aadhaar is not conclusive for citizenship**, hence not mandatory.
- Extensive public outreach ongoing via:
- **Mobile notifications** to over 7.89 crore electors.
- **House-to-house verification** and real-time monitoring via ECINET.

- **Rebuttal to citizenship allegations:**

- ECI claimed that it has no intent to remove voters arbitrarily.
- Exclusion will happen only if required by law and supported by evidence.

Conclusion

- The Supreme Court **has upheld the ECI's constitutional autonomy** in revising electoral rolls but emphasized **accountability and transparency**.
- The July 28 hearing is expected to address the legal validity, procedural fairness, and timing concerns of the SIR process ahead of Bihar's crucial elections.
- It will also try to balance **documentary rigor with universal suffrage**, underlining the importance of **institutional accountability and voter inclusion** in India's electoral democracy.

Source: IE | IE

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