

SPECIAL INTENSIVE REVISION (SIR) IN WEST BENGAL - I

- The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) undertaken by the Election Commission of India (ECI) across multiple States aimed to clean electoral rolls by removing duplicate, migrated, and deceased voters, while also identifying “illegal immigrants”.
- However, its implementation in West Bengal has triggered a major political, legal, and institutional **controversy**, raising concerns about electoral integrity and democratic inclusion.

Objectives and Scope of SIR:

- **Purification** of electoral rolls (removal of ASDD - Absent, Shifted, Dead, Duplicate voters).
- **Identification** of ineligible or illegal voters.
- Use of technology (AI-based verification) for large-scale scrutiny.
- Conducted in 13 States/UTs, but most contentious in West Bengal.

Scale and Impact in West Bengal:

- **Mass deletions and data concerns:**
 - **Initial voters:** 7.66 crore in November 2025.
 - **Draft rolls:** Voters in West Bengal reduced to about 7 crore in December 2025.
 - Total deletions (so far) of about 90.8 lakh, reducing the final eligible voters to 6.77 crore.
- **Categories of concern:**
 - 30 lakh “unmapped voters”, with no linkage with 2002 revision.
 - 1.2 crore “logical discrepancy” cases, identified (through the AI-based scrutiny) anomalies such as -
 - Spelling mismatches in names (2002 vs 2025)
 - More than six voters linked to one ancestor
 - Implausible parent-child age gaps (outside 15–45 years)
 - Grandparent-voter age gap less than 40 years

- Gender-name inconsistencies
- **Outcome:** About 1.5 crore cases flagged, 60 lakh remained disputed after hearings, resulting in **mass exclusion** pending verification.

Judicial Intervention - An Extraordinary Step:

- **Role of the SC:** The Supreme Court of India termed the situation a “**trust deficit**” between the ECI and the State government, and ordered judicial supervision of the adjudication process.
- **Implementation:** The Bench led by the CJI Surya Kant, deployed about 700 judicial officers from WB, Odisha, Jharkhand, and took over quasi-judicial roles of EROs/AEROs (Electoral Registration Officers/Assistant Electoral Registration Officers).
- **Results:** 27 lakh names struck down, while remaining cases referred to 19 special tribunals. Many affected voters are unlikely to vote due to a roll freeze before elections.

Political Fallout:

- **State vs Centre narrative:**
 - The ruling political party in West Bengal allegedly targeted disenfranchisement, and criticised the timing and scale of SIR.
 - However, the Central government supported the process as necessary electoral cleansing.
- **Electoral implications:** SIR has become a central campaign issue, raises questions about free and fair elections.
- **Concerns raised by Civil Society:**
 - **Allegations of bias:** Disproportionate deletion of Muslim voters, for example, in Nandigram (95% deletions allegedly Muslims). High deletions in Muslim-majority districts like Murshidabad, Malda, and Uttar Dinajpur.
 - **Gender dimension:** Women voters, especially in Matua communities, reportedly affected.
 - **Democratic critique:** Termed as “**rewriting**” rather than revision of electoral rolls.

SPECIAL INTENSIVE REVISION (SIR) IN WEST BENGAL - II

Key Challenges:

- **Trust deficit:** Breakdown of confidence between constitutional body (ECI) and elected government.
- **Algorithmic transparency:** Lack of clarity on AI-based decision-making raises accountability concerns.
- **Disenfranchisement risks:** Large-scale exclusions threaten universal adult suffrage.
- **Institutional overreach:** Judiciary stepping into executive functions raises separation of powers issues.
- **Electoral integrity vs inclusion:** Balancing clean rolls with inclusive democracy.

Way Forward:

- **Transparent methodology:** Public disclosure of AI criteria and audit mechanisms.
- **Strengthening due process:** Adequate time, documentation support, and grievance redressal for voters.
- **Independent oversight:** Third-party or parliamentary scrutiny to ensure neutrality.
- **Safeguards against bias:** Periodic social audits to prevent targeted exclusion (religion/gender).
- **Institutional coordination:** Better cooperation between ECI, State governments, and judiciary.

Conclusion:

- The West Bengal SIR episode underscores a deeper tension between electoral integrity and democratic inclusiveness.
- While cleaning electoral rolls is essential for credible elections, the scale, methodology, and timing of such exercises must inspire public trust.
- The controversy reveals that procedural fairness, transparency, and institutional credibility are as vital as the objective of electoral purification itself.

EXPORT INSPECTION COUNCIL



Recently, India said that the requirement for a certificate of inspection from Export Inspection Council (EIC) for rice exports is limited to the EU, UK, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

- It was set up by the Government of India under Section 3 of the Export (Quality Control and Inspection) Act, 1963.
- It ensures sound development of export trade of India through quality control and inspection and matters connected therewith.
- It is the official export –certification body of India which ensures quality and safety of products exported from India.
- It is headed by a Chairman. The Executive Head of the Council is the Director of Inspection & Quality Control who is responsible for day to day functioning of the Council.
- **Function:**
 - It ensures that products notified under the Export (Quality Control and Inspection) Act 1963 are meeting the requirements of the importing countries in respect of their quality and safety.
 - It provides mandatory certification for various Food items namely fish & fishery products, dairy products, honey, egg products, meat and meat products, poultry meat products, animal casing, Gelatine, Ossein and crushed bones.
- The Export Inspection Agencies (EIAs) are located at Mumbai, Kolkata, Kochi, Delhi and Chennai with a network of 30 sub offices backed by the state of art, NABL accredited laboratories at various places.
- **Headquarter:** Delhi
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

INDUS RIVER DOLPHIN



Recently, it was observed that conservation reserves, citizen science, and habitat protection gives the Indus River dolphin a fighting chance in India.

- The Indus River dolphin (*Platanista minor*) is one of the **rarest mammals**.
- **Appearance:**
 - It has the **long, pointed nose** characteristic of all river dolphins.
 - The **teeth are visible in both the upper and lower jaws** even when the mouth is closed.
- **Distribution:** It presently only occurs in the **Indus River system**, along with a remnant population in the **Beas River**.
- **Features of Indus River Dolphin:**
 - It is **functionally blind**. It has extremely reduced eyes without lenses.
 - Instead of vision, it relies **entirely on echolocation to navigate**, hunt and avoid obstacles in the highly turbid waters.
 - It has a remarkable trait of **swimming predominantly on its side**.
 - This allows it to use its long, sensitive snout to probe the riverbed for prey. Side-swimming is extremely rare among cetaceans and is a signature feature of this species.
 - It lives largely **solitary or in very small groups** (typically mother-calf pairs).
 - **Diet:** These are **carnivores** (piscivores). They feed on a variety of fish and crustaceans, including prawns, carp, catfish, and gobies.
- **Threats:** Water pollution, poaching, fragmentation of habitat due to barrages
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
 - **Wildlife Protection Act 1972:** Schedule I

WHAT IS THE WINDFALL TAX?



- A windfall tax is a **higher tax levied** by the government on **specific industries** when the industry experiences unexpected and above-average profits due to various global and geopolitical events outside the control of the industry.
- As the name suggests, “windfall” refers to a dramatic and **unanticipated increase in profits**. On the other hand, “tax” implies an imposition levied on this dramatic income growth.
- The government imposes this tax when it notices a sudden rise in an industry’s revenue.
- The **increase in profits is not attributed to any expansion or investment strategy of a business but to a favourable external factor for which the business is not responsible**.
- It is levied on industries or **businesses that make disproportionate profits during unexpected situations** like commodity shortages, wars, pandemics, changes in government policy, etc.
- The most **common industries** that fall target to windfall gains tax **include oil, gas, and mining**.
- **Some individual taxes**—such as **inheritance tax or taxes on lottery or game-show winnings**—can also be construed as a windfall tax.
- **Objective:**
 - The primary objective of windfall taxes is to **appropriate a portion of these extraordinary profits**, which are perceived to exceed normal returns, **for the public good**.
 - Governments assert that these profits are not solely due to the taxed entity’s efforts but also due to external factors, justifying the redistribution of such gains to benefit society as a whole.
 - It is also used as a **supplementary revenue stream for the government**.

DIBRU-SAIKHOWA NATIONAL PARK



- It is located in Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts, **Assam**.
- The park is **bounded by the Brahmaputra and Lohit Rivers** in the north and the **Dibru River** in the south.
- It is also a **Biosphere Reserve**.
- **Climate:** It has a **tropical monsoon climate** with a hot and wet summer and cool and usually dry winter.

Flora:

- It mainly consists of **moist mixed semi-evergreen forests, moist mixed deciduous forests, canebrakes, and grasslands**.
- It has the **largest salix swamp forest in northeastern India**.
- The forest consists of beautiful **pine vegetation** and some other common and rare **tropical trees** like Tetrasperma, Dalbergiasissoo, Dibru-Saikhowa, Dilleniaindica, etc.

Fauna:

- Though the park was **primarily meant for the conservation** and development of the **White-winged wood duck** in its natural habitat, it is also **famous for its bright colored wild horses** called the **Feral Horses**.
- It is the habitat of some rare and endangered animals such as the **Hoolock gibbon, water buffalo, tiger, elephant, capped langur, slow loris, and Gangetic river dolphin**.
- It is an identified **Important Bird Area (IBA)** having more than 382 species of birds, some of which are **Greater Adjutant Stork, Lesser Adjutant Stork, Greater Crested Grebe, etc.**

KALAI-II HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT



- It is a **hydropower project** planned on the **Lohit River** (a tributary of the Brahmaputra River) in the Anjaw District of Arunachal Pradesh.
- It is a **run-of-river with pondage project**.
- The project involves construction of a **concrete gravity dam, upstream & downstream coffer dam, diversion tunnel, intake tunnel, pressure Shafts, underground Powerhouse complex, surge chamber, and Tail Race Tunnel, etc.**
- The project has an installed capacity of **1,200 megawatt (MW)** comprising six units of 190 MW and one unit of 60 MW.
- It is projected to generate 4,852.95 million units annually.
- The project will be **implemented** through a **joint venture company between THDC India Limited** (formerly Tehri Hydro Development Corporation Limited) and the **government of Arunachal Pradesh**.

CHAGOS ISLANDS



- **Location:** It is an island group located in the **central Indian Ocean**.
- It is an **overseas territory of the United Kingdom** that was established in 1965.
 - The principal islands in the archipelago include the Diego Garcia atoll, Danger Island, Egmont Islands, Eagle Islands, Nelsons Island, Peros Banhos atoll, Three Brothers Islands, and the Solomon Islands.
 - **Diego Garcia** is the largest and the most southerly island of the Chagos Archipelago.
- **Terrain:** The islands feature **flat and low terrain**.
 - There are **no rivers and lakes** on the islands.

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- **Climate:** It experiences a **tropical marine climate** with high temperatures and elevated humidity levels.
- The island's climate is **heavily moderated by the trade winds** which blow over the islands.



SULPHUR

- Sulphur (identified by the letter S) is a **non-metallic chemical element**.
- It can be found as a pure element or as **sulphate or sulphide minerals**.
- It **occurs naturally in the environment** and is believed to be the thirteenth most abundant element in the earth's crust.
- **Properties:**
 - In its pure form, sulphur is a tasteless, odorless, brittle **solid with a pale yellow color**.
 - It's a **poor conductor of electricity** that doesn't dissolve in water.
 - It **combines directly with almost all the elements** with the exception of gold, platinum and the noble gases.
- **Distribution of Sulphur in India:** Puga Valley, Barren Island of Bay of Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh
- **Uses of Sulphur:**
 - Sulphur is an essential raw material for many chemical industries and is essentially used for the **production of sulphuric acid**.
 - Powdered form of sulphur produced by sublimation process is generally used in rubber vulcanisation, **agricultural dusts and pharmaceutical products**.
 - Sulphur is used as a **light-generating medium** in the rare lighting fixtures known as "sulphur lamps".
 - Sulphur compounds are also used in **detergents, fungicides, dyestuffs and agrichemicals**.