

Electoral Roll Revision in Bihar Draws Strong Condemnation: "Don't Play With Fire"



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday, July 25, 2025, issued a stern warning against the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, cautioning against "playing with fire" and alleging that the exercise is a politically motivated attempt to "engineer outcomes" rather than genuinely reform the system. His remarks add a powerful voice to the growing chorus of opposition and civil society groups criticizing the Election Commission of India's (ECI) sweeping voter verification drive in the poll-bound state.

The SIR in Bihar, initiated on June 24, 2025, mandates that all of Bihar's nearly 80 million voters re-register by July 25, with a draft list expected on August 1. The ECI maintains that the revision is essential to ensure the purity of electoral rolls by removing deceased, permanently shifted, or duplicate voters and to ensure only Indian citizens are enrolled. ECI data indicates that millions of names, including approximately 20 lakh (2 million) deceased voters, 28 lakh (2.8 million) permanently migrated individuals, and 7 lakh (700,000) duplicate entries, have been flagged for potential deletion.

However, critics, including Chief Minister Stalin, argue that the process is being misused to "quietly erase voters of disadvantaged and dissenting communities," thereby "tilting the balance" in favor of the ruling party. "This is not about reform. It is about engineering outcomes," Stalin asserted, adding, "If you cannot defeat us, you seek to delete us. Don't play with fire. Any threat to our democracy will be met with firm resistance."

A major point of contention has been the ECI's initial exclusion of commonly accepted documents like Aadhaar, ration cards, and even Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) issued before January 2025 as acceptable proof for voter registration under SIR. While the ECI has since clarified that some of these documents can be used for limited identity verification, the stringent requirements for citizenship proof, including demands for parental citizenship documents from certain age groups, have drawn widespread concern. This has fueled fears of mass disenfranchisement, particularly among poor and minority communities who may lack such documentation within the tight submission window.

The Supreme Court is currently hearing petitions challenging the ECI's decision, with a crucial hearing slated for Monday, July 28. The Court has directed the ECI to ensure that the process allows for appeals and hearings before the final list is published. Legal experts have also pointed to a "grey area," as the Union government holds the authority to cancel citizenship, yet the ECI asserts its power to verify citizenship for electoral registration purposes.

As the deadline for form submission passed on Friday, with an estimated 64 lakh (6.4 million) names likely facing removal from the rolls, the controversy surrounding Bihar's electoral revision highlights fundamental questions about voter rights, democratic integrity, and the powers of the Election Commission ahead of crucial state elections.