



**TATHASTU**  
Institute Of Civil Services

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Institute Of Civil Services



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# The infirmities in the SIR of electoral rolls

**T**he Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls (SIR) ordered by the Election Commission of India (ECI) in 12 States and Union Territories (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep), where elections are due, has provoked strong protests from some State governments – some have challenged it in the Supreme Court of India. The SIR was conducted in Bihar earlier, beginning in June; the Assembly election has just been held in the State.

The Opposition had opposed the SIR in Bihar on various grounds which included the haste with which such a massive exercise was sought to be done. The Opposition challenged it in the Court on the ground that, *inter alia*, the ECI's power to conduct such an extensive revision after a summary revision done as recently as in 2024 was unconstitutional. Although the Court made some interim observations and directions to protect a voter's right, the constitutional issues have not been settled.

The ECI claimed, while justifying the SIR in Bihar, that the last SIR had been conducted in 2002-03 with demographic changes since then due to large-scale urbanisation, migration and death. Therefore, it was necessary to revise the roll comprehensively to reflect the latest demographic picture in the State.

### The issue of timing

The ECI, no doubt, has the statutory right to conduct a comprehensive revision of the electoral roll. But the question as to why it should be done just a couple of months before elections to the Assembly has remained unanswered. The point is that intensive revision involves a massive exercise of enumeration which requires enumerators to visit every household and collect data, deal with claims and objections and decide appeals. In fact, between 2003 and 2024, there have been five general elections to the Lok Sabha and many elections in the States and Union Territories. But the ECI did not conduct an SIR anytime during this period, which is unexplainable. Therefore, it is intriguing why the ECI has chosen to conduct an SIR just before the Bihar elections and now a few months before the Assembly elections in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

The preparation and the revision of the electoral roll in the country is dealt with under Section 21 of the Representation of the People



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(RP) Act, 1950. This section provides for the revision of the roll before the general election to the Lok Sabha or the State Assemblies and revision in "any year" if the ECI so directs.

### On revisions and voter citizenship

It also provides for a special revision in any constituency or a part of it on the direction of the ECI. A careful reading of this legal provision would reveal that the revision before the general election is mandatory and the other revisions are done as and when the ECI directs this; the reasons have to be recorded by the ECI for undertaking such revisions.

Further, a closer look at Rule 25 of the Registration of Electors Rules 1960 would show that revision of the roll done before the elections under Section 21(2)(a) is summary in character and the revision done under Section 21(2)(b) in 'any year' is an intensive revision. The intensive revision is akin to the preparation of a new roll.

Intensive revision, as the name implies, is a comprehensive, and hence time-consuming exercise. Therefore, it should be presumed that this exercise is delinked from the elections and is done in any year when there is no likelihood of a general election. Since the revision before the election is linked to the elections, it can be reasonably assumed that only a summary revision can be done before an election. So, the SIR of the rolls just a couple of months before the elections is not envisaged under the RP Act, 1950.

Another important issue which has come up in the context of the SIR is the nature of the documents which are sought by the ECI to prove the citizenship of voters. Under Article 326 of the Constitution, a voter has to be a citizen of India. So, the issue of citizenship becomes important at the time of enrolment of voters in the electoral list. The documents demanded by the ECI from applicants did not include Aadhaar as the ECI is of the opinion that Aadhaar is not a proof of citizenship.

The matter was settled by the Supreme Court, through an interim order, by directing the ECI to accept Aadhaar also as a document to establish the identity of the voter. As a matter of fact, the main question that arises here is what exactly the powers of the ECI are to determine which documents are necessary to prove the citizenship of Indians.

Citizenship is governed by Articles 5 to 11 of the Constitution and the Citizenship Act of 1955. Under these, Indian citizenship is acquired by

birth, descent, registration and naturalisation. The point to note in the context of the SIR is that the law relating to citizenship is administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs and not the ECI. Article 326 says that only a citizen can be the voter, so the question of citizenship of the voter becomes crucially important when the electoral roll is prepared by the ECI which has the exclusive authority to prepare the roll for election to the Assemblies and Parliament. But how does the ECI determine citizenship? Or can the ECI specify the documents to prove the citizenship of voters?

The simple answer is that the ECI is not the authority which can specify the documents to prove citizenship. It can be done only by the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India. In fact, the ECI can only verify the documents so notified by the government. It is legally not right for the ECI to say that it has the power to determine the citizenship question and to not accept a particular document for this purpose. But the problem is that the Ministry of Home Affairs has so far not notified any comprehensive list of documents which are required by voters to prove their citizenship. In fact, Article 326 impliedly requires the government to specify such documents. In the absence of such a list, the ECI arrogates to itself the power to specify the list of documents which voters should produce before it to prove their citizenship. How can the ECI exercise a power which is vested in the Home Ministry?

### A key decision

It is not clear how many voters whose names were in the roll till 2024 were removed from the voters' list in Bihar after the SIR on the ground that they are not citizens because they could not produce any of the documents specified by the ECI. In this context, the Supreme Court's decision in *Lal Babu Hussein And Others v. Electoral Registration Officer And Others* (1995) is of crucial importance. It said: "In the second situation, since the name is already entered, it must be presumed that before entering his name the concerned officer must have gone through the procedural requirements under the statute".

Article 14 forbids any arbitrary action by the state or its agencies. Article 21 forbids the deprivation of the liberty of any person except in accordance with a fair and just procedure. The legal and constitutional authorities need to adhere to these constitutional directions.

Although the top court made interim observations and directions to protect a voter's right, the Election Commission of India's actions do raise questions

## Fishing troubles

India must persuade its fishermen to give up bottom trawling

The arrest of 14 Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy on November 9 for allegedly crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and entering Sri Lankan waters could be viewed by some as yet another event statistically. However, the incident forms part of the painful legacy of the Palk Bay dispute, which India and Sri Lanka have still not been able to resolve despite the livelihood of fishing communities on either side being at stake. So far, 128 fishermen from Tamil Nadu, including those apprehended in 2024, and their boats, remain under Sri Lankan custody, as stated in Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's recent letter to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. This is a complex and chronic problem. As far as the fishermen of Tamil Nadu are concerned, they struggle to access traditional fishing waters, even if this means going beyond the IMBL. The duration and cost of each voyage are of not much concern to the fishermen and their employers, who own fishing vessels, as this is a rapid operation. Leaving aside the high possibility of action by Sri Lanka, the swiftness with which each voyage is carried out is what drives fishermen in the name of "tradition". This involves bottom trawling which damages coral beds, shrimp habitats, and depletes fish stocks. The fishermen of the Northern Province, who have still to overcome the trauma of the civil war, would not have a problem even if the Tamil Nadu fishermen cross the IMBL, but follow traditional fishing methods and use small boats. What hurts them more is the use of trawlers which destroy their marine resources.

The Joint Working Group on Fisheries met in Colombo on October 29, 2024. In March this year, fishermen leaders from Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu visited Sri Lanka to hold discussion with their counterparts but there was no official sanction for the initiative of the two fishing communities. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna-led National People's Power regime, which has been in office for about a year, has not yet shown any urgency in resolving the dispute, except taking a strident position. Experts have suggested a number of measures to resolve the issue. Apart from learning from the experience of the EU Baltic countries and equitable quotas to conserve the living resources, India and Sri Lanka can set up a research station in the Palk Bay region for experiments to increase living resources and safeguard the marine environment. To boost the confidence of the fishermen of the Northern Province, New Delhi should go the extra mile by launching a liberal assistance scheme to prepare them to move out of bottom trawling and take to deep sea fishing, apart from imposing a ban on the pernicious practice eventually.

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### India recorded the highest greenhouse gas emissions for 2024

However, in per capita terms, India's emissions remained less than half the global average.

#### DATA POINT

##### The Hindu Data Team

In 2024, India registered the largest absolute increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions among all countries compared to the previous year. India was the third largest overall emitter of GHGs in 2024, behind only China and the United States, in absolute terms. However, its per capita GHG emissions remained less than half the global average, highlighting the country's relatively low emissions intensity despite rapid absolute growth.

Worldwide, GHG emissions are on an increasing trend. In 2024, 57,700 metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> (anthropogenic GHG) was emitted, the highest on record (Chart 1). Fossil CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from burning coal, oil, and natural gas accounted for 69% of GHG emissions in 2024 (Chart 2). Emissions from power generation were the largest single source for fossil CO<sub>2</sub>. This was followed by emissions from industrial combustion, transportation, and fuel production. Anthropogenic CH<sub>4</sub> (methane) emissions – emitted majority during agricultural and waste management procedures – accounted for 16% of GHG emissions, the second largest share. Deforestation and land use change also amounted significantly to this year's rise in emissions.

In 2024, India's per capita GHG emissions were 3.7 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, less than half of the global average of 6.4 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (Chart 3a). However, India's per capita GHG emissions grew at 3.7% between 2023 and 2024, much higher than the global average of 0.04% increase (Chart 3b).

The 57,700 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e worth of GHG emitted globally in 2024 was 1,500 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e higher than 2023. India contributed 16% MtCO<sub>2</sub>e to this rise, the highest among all nations. China stood second, contributing 12% MtCO<sub>2</sub>e (Chart 4).

#### Carbon climb

The data for the charts were sourced from the United Nations Environment Programme (2025)'s 'Emissions Gap Report 2025: Off target - Continued collective inaction'

Chart 1: Total net anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions by gas, 1990–2024

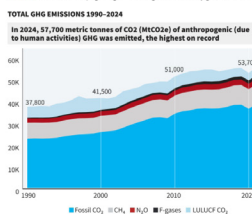


Chart 2: Total net greenhouse gas emissions by gas, sector, and fossil or non-fossil category in 2024

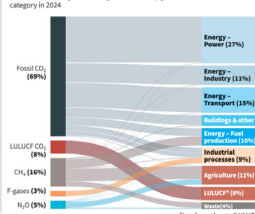


Chart 3a & 3b: Per capita greenhouse gas emissions of the six largest emitters (tCO<sub>2</sub>e/capita/year).

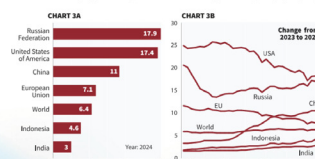
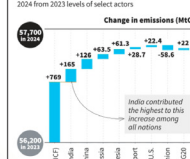


Chart 4: Contributions to the increase in GHG emissions in 2024 from 2023 levels of select sectors



## UPSC PYQ 2020

### SC judge: imported ideas may not save endangered species

Krishnasdas Rajagopal  
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court Judge Justice P.S. Narasimha on Tuesday said many environmental law principles imported from the West such as "inter-generational equity" are anthropocentric and would hardly be of any assistance in protecting an endangered species from extinction.

Justice Narasimha made these oral observations while hearing a petition filed by M.K. Ranjitsinh on the conservation of the dying species of the Great Indian Bustard, which is being bred in captivity, and the Lesser Florican.

Senior advocate Shyam Divan, appearing for the petitioner, said there were 70 bustards in captivity and 150 in the wild. Lesser Floricans number 70.

"That is all... Captive breeding may be successful with the Great Indian Bustard, but it is not showing success with the Lesser Florican. Extinction is not an option for these two species," he said.

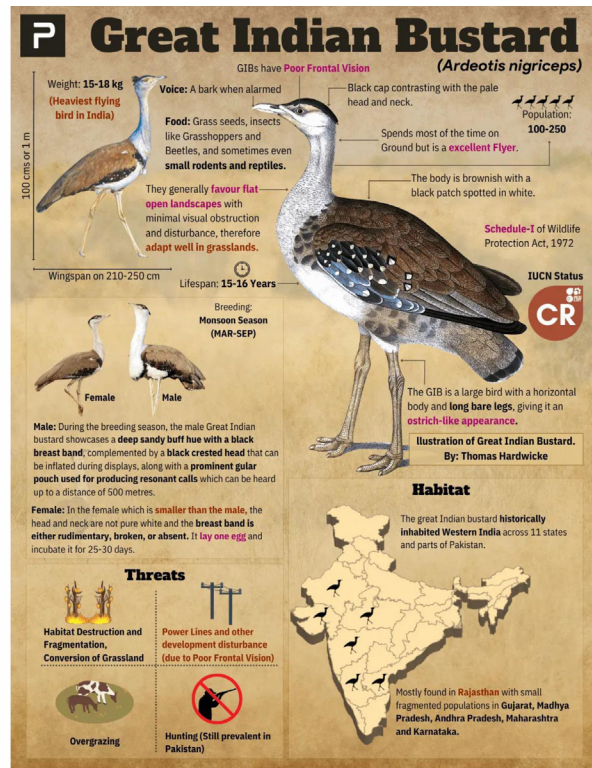
**'Biblical roots'**  
Justice Narasimha said principles such as inter-generational equity had "Biblical" roots, with humans at the top.



The Great Indian Bustard

The judge referred to how, 15 years ago, a *amicus curiae* in the red sanders conservation case, had urged the Supreme Court to consider the "intrinsic worth" of an endangered species rather than its "instrumental value to human beings".

He criticised principles such as inter-generational equity which "pre-supposes the higher needs of human beings and lays down that exploitation of natural resources must be equitably distributed between the present and future generation". The judge said the court, in its judgment in the red sanders case, had accepted his submissions on the need to take an ecocentric approach, which "obliges every citizen to have compassion for all living creatures", in biodiversity law.



## ISRO conducts crucial safety tests on main parachutes for Gaganyaan crew

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) recently conducted an important test on main parachutes for the Gaganyaan Crew Module.

The test was conducted at the Babina Field Firing Range (BFFR) in Uttar Pradesh's Jhansi on November 3 as part of the ongoing series of Integrated Main Parachute Airdrop Tests (IMAT) for the qualification of parachute system for Gaganyaan mission.

For the Gaganyaan Crew Module, the parachute system comprises a total of 10 parachutes of four types. The descent sequence begins with two apex cover separation parachutes that remove the protective cover of the parachute compartment, followed by two drogue parachutes that stabilise and decelerate the



For the Gaganyaan Crew Module, the parachute system comprises a total of 10 parachutes of four types. Photo: X/@isro

module. "Upon release of the drogues, three pilot parachutes are deployed to extract three main parachutes, which further slow down the Crew Module to ensure a safe touchdown. The system is designed with redundancy – two of the three main parachutes are sufficient to achieve a safe landing," the space

agency said. The main parachutes of the Gaganyaan mission deploy through a step-by-step process known as reefed inflation. "In this process, the parachute first opens partially, which is called reefing, and then fully opens after a predetermined period of time, known as disreefing. This process is carried out

using a pyro device," it added. In the recent test, ISRO demonstrated one of the extreme scenarios – delay in the disreefing between the two main parachutes successfully, thereby validating the system for its maximum design conditions. The test evaluated the system's structural integrity and load distribution under asymmetric disreefing conditions, which is one of the most critical load scenarios expected during actual mission descent. A simulated mass equivalent to the Crew Module was dropped from an altitude of 2.5 km using the Indian Air Force's IL-76 aircraft. The parachute system deployed as planned and the sequence was executed flawlessly, and the test article achieved a stable descent and soft landing, validating the robustness of the parachute design.