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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Rolls and the Displaced: Revising Manipur's Electoral List

THE HINDU

10 July 2026

POLITY

GS2

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[in linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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Source: ujjyari.com — researched, fact-checked & UPSC-mapped

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THE LIFT LINE

The right to vote is only as real as the name on the roll, and in a place where thousands have lost their homes and their papers, revising that roll is an act of either inclusion or erasure.

WHY THIS EDITORIAL MATTERS FOR YOUR EXAM

A Special Intensive Revision (SIR (<https://ujjyari.com/terms/sir-special-intensive-revision/>)) of electoral rolls in Manipur, a state recovering from prolonged ethnic conflict, raises a hard question in electoral governance: how to keep the roll accurate without disenfranchising displaced people who can no longer produce documents. For GS2, this sits at the intersection of the Election Commission's constitutional mandate, the machinery of universal adult suffrage, and the rights of internally displaced persons.

GS Paper 2: the Election Commission of India, its powers and functions; salient features of the Representation of the People Act; issues relating to the electoral process; the rights of vulnerable sections.

For **Prelims**, hold the specifics: Article 324 vests superintendence, direction and control of elections in the Election Commission; Article 326 guarantees adult suffrage; the Representation of the People Act, 1950, governs the preparation of electoral rolls; and Manipur, where President's Rule was revoked in early 2026 in favour of an elected government, still has large numbers of internally displaced persons in relief camps. For **Mains**, argue that roll revision must balance purity against inclusion, and that in conflict-affected settings inclusion carries special constitutional weight.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

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An electoral roll is the foundation of every election; a citizen who is not on it cannot vote regardless of eligibility. Periodically the Election Commission of India orders a revision to add new voters, remove the deceased and duplicates, and correct errors. A Special Intensive Revision is a more thorough, house-to-house exercise that can require voters to establish their **entitlement** (<https://ujjayanti.com/vocab/entitlement/>) afresh.

Manipur is not an ordinary setting for such an exercise. Years of ethnic conflict displaced tens of thousands of people, many from the Kuki-Zo and other communities, into relief camps, sometimes far from their home constituencies. Homes were burnt and documents lost. The state has since returned to an elected government after President's Rule was revoked in early 2026, but the human aftermath persists in the camps. Into this fragile landscape comes a roll revision that, if it demands documents many people simply no longer possess, could quietly strike genuine voters from the list.

THE CORE ARGUMENT / ISSUE

Two legitimate goals in tension

Every roll revision pursues two goods that can pull against each other. One is purity: a roll free of ghost, duplicate and ineligible entries, which protects the integrity of the vote. The other is inclusion: ensuring every eligible citizen is enrolled, which is the whole point of universal adult suffrage under Article 326. In stable conditions the tension is manageable. In a post-conflict setting it sharpens, because the people most likely to lack documents are precisely those the conflict has already harmed.

Displacement and the documentation trap

An internally displaced person may be a lifelong resident and an unquestioned citizen, yet unable to produce a house, an address or the papers a revision demands. Requiring documentation as a **precondition** (<https://ujjayanti.com/vocab/precondition/>) of remaining on the roll can therefore disenfranchise the displaced not because they are ineligible but because catastrophe stripped them of proof. A revision blind to this reality risks turning an administrative process into a second dispossession.

PRINCIPLE	WHAT IT PROTECTS	RISK IF OVERWEIGHTED
Purity of the roll	Integrity against fraud	Genuine displaced voters struck off
Inclusion (Art 326)	Universal adult suffrage	Ineligible entries retained
Documentation	Verifiable entitlement	Excludes those who lost papers
Special provision for displaced	Rights of the vulnerable	Perceived dilution of scrutiny

The commission's constitutional space

The Election Commission enjoys wide powers under Article 324 to superintend and conduct elections, and it can craft procedures suited to local conditions, including special arrangements for displaced voters, camp-based enrolment and alternative proof. The question is not whether it may act inclusively but whether it will, given that inclusion in a divided polity is itself politically sensitive.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (ANALYTICAL FRAME)

See the roll not as a database to be cleaned but as the register of who counts as a citizen for the purposes of self-government. The transferable rule: procedural neatness must never override the [substantive](https://ujjayanti.com/vocab/substantive/) right it exists to serve, and where a lawful process would foreseeably strip eligible people of a fundamental entitlement, the process must be adapted, not the right surrendered. In conflict-affected areas, the burden should shift toward enabling proof, not demanding it.

THE DIAGRAM IN WORDS

Ethnic conflict -> displacement into relief camps + lost documents -> SIR ordered under RP Act 1950 -> document demand meets undocumented displaced -> risk of disenfranchisement vs risk of impure roll -> ECI uses Article 324 powers -> fix: camp enrolment + alternative proof + special provisions -> inclusive, credible roll

WAY FORWARD

- ❶ **Enable proof, do not just demand it.** Accept alternative and camp-verified documentation for displaced persons so that lost papers do not mean lost votes.
- ❷ **Take enrolment to the camps.** Conduct special drives in relief camps and among the displaced, treating access as the commission's responsibility rather than the voter's burden.
- ❸ **Guard both goals transparently.** Publish the additions and deletions, allow easy appeals, and let observers verify that neither fraud nor exclusion is quietly winning.
- ❹ **Keep the process neutral and trusted.** In a polity scarred by conflict, the credibility of the roll depends on being seen to favour neither community, which means consistent, published standards applied everywhere.

PYQ LINKAGE AND PRACTICE

UPSC has asked about the powers of the Election Commission, electoral reforms and the challenges of the electoral process. This editorial links those themes to a specific 2026 revision in a post-conflict state.

Practice question: “In revising electoral rolls in conflict-affected regions, the purity of the roll must be reconciled with the inclusion mandate (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/mandate/>) of Article 326.” Discuss with reference to internally displaced voters. (250 words, 15 marks)

Sources: *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com/>)

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