

India's viral Cockroach Party calls election panel head 'biggest threat' to democracy. Here's why it matters

Priyanka Salve

India's viral youth movement, Cockroach Janta Party, on Thursday demanded the resignation of India's chief election officer, calling him the "biggest threat" to the country's democracy. The CJP has said it will begin a nationwide protest from Oct. 2 if the chief election officer fails to resign by Saturday. Two members of the Election Commission made 14 formal complaints over discrepancies in a voter roll revision process over the last 10 months, said an Indian Express report. Cockroach Janta Party, the viral pseudo-political movement behind the Gen Z protests that [rattled Prime Minister Narendra Modi's](#) government in July, has demanded the resignation of India's chief election officer after claiming he had undermined the country's democracy. On Friday, Abhijeet Dipke, the founder of the CJP, said the party [will begin a nationwide protest](#) from Oct. 2 if the chief election officer does not resign by Saturday. In a press conference on Thursday, Dipke said the country's Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar, "is the [biggest threat](#) to India's

democracy," raising questions over his role in a recent electoral roll revision exercise that has led to the deletion of millions of voters.

The exercise has given the government the power to select who can vote, rather than empowering voters to choose the government, Dipke said at a press conference.

The three members of the Election Commission are handpicked by the government and appointed by a selection panel of the prime minister, the home minister and the leader of opposition. The Indian National Congress, the main opposition political party, had [opposed the](#)

[selection of Kumar](#) as the head of the election panel last year, as per local media reports.

Voter roll revisions

Last year, the Election Commission of India began conducting "special intensive revisions", or SIR, to update voter lists across the country.

The authority said the [exercise aimed to ensure](#) "electoral rolls are accurate, up-to-date, and free of ineligible or duplicate entries, while ensuring that no eligible elector is left out."

However, local media reports earlier this month [showed millions of voters](#) had been deleted from the draft electoral rolls. India's leader of the

opposition, Rahul Gandhi, who has been complaining of ["vote theft" for years](#), joined the CJP in demanding the resignation of Kumar on Thursday.

The concerns raised by Modi's political rivals over the election process have intensified after an investigation by the Indian Express on Wednesday revealed that the two other members of the Election Commission had made 14 formal complaints over discrepancies in the SIR process over the last 10 months.

The two members, Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, complained about [being kept in the dark](#) about adding new voters and deleting names, the

report said. They also flagged concerns over the integrity of voter software and warned against voter database access being centralized in Delhi, bypassing state officials, as per the Indian Express.

In a [statement](#) on Wednesday, the Election Commission underplayed the objections. "Differing views and observations are a normal part of deliberation in any institution," it said, adding that they are part of "the decision-making process."

It has yet to comment on the demand for the resignation of the chief election commissioner and the reported deletion of 130 million voters in the draft electoral rolls.

The process for updating electoral rolls started last year in Bihar, where Modi and his allies [won a landslide victory](#), winning more than 200 seats out of 243 in the state assembly.

Modi's popularity was seen to be waning when, in June 2024, his party failed to secure [an outright majority](#) in the national polls and had to form a [coalition government](#) for his third term as prime minister.

[Continued on page 14](#) ➔

