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Electoral Roll Revision & Voter Disenfranchisement in Bihar (2025)

Background of the Issue: The Election Commission of India (ECI) is conducting a Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Bihar (ending August 1, 2025). Over 12 lakh (1.2 million) names have been deleted from the voter list. Many deletions are due to “non residency” people were not present at their home address during verification.

Law vs. Reality

The Representation of the People Act, 1950 assumes people live where they are born. This was true in 1950 when most people lived in rural areas and didn't migrate. But now, over 45 crore (450 million) Indians are internal migrants about 37% of the population. In Bihar, 36% of households have at least one migrant member.

Key Problem: Citizenship vs. Residency Citizenship = permanent legal status (you are Indian or not). Residency = where you live currently. Voter rolls are based on where you live (residency), not just your citizenship. Migrants live in two places home village and work city

but get excluded from both. ECI's Role and Limitations ECI is sticking to rules instead of trying new ways to include more voters. It can't change the law, but it can push for reform and try pilot projects to help migrants vote. Just following procedure isn't enough when the system itself excludes lakhs of citizens. **Global Examples – Better Practices USA:** Absentee and mail-in ballots allow people to vote from outside their home state.

Philippines: Overseas workers can vote through absentee ballots (60%+ turnout). **Australia:** Sends mobile polling booths to remote and mobile populations (90%+ turnout).

Voter Awareness Problems Most people don't know they can claim or object during voter list corrections. In Bihar, 60% of voters are unaware of this process. Among migrants, only 25% know about their rights. Blaming voters for not taking action is unfair, given these awareness and access gaps. **Final Message** The ECI must defend fair elections but also demand better laws for the mobile population. Political parties must stop using voter issues for politics and instead help people register. A

better electoral system needs inclusive thinking, voter support, and legal reform.

The Hindu

India–U.K. Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

FTA Signed Between India and U.K. Signed on July 24, 2025 by India's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and U.K.'s Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds. Approved by India's Union Cabinet on July 22, 2025. Officially called the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). Negotiations concluded earlier on May 6, 2025. Aims to boost trade by allowing tariff-free access to goods and services. Economic Benefits vs. Health Risks FTA will allow cheaper import of U.K.-made HFSS foods (High Fat, Sugar, Salt) like biscuits, chocolates, and soft drinks. These products could be marketed aggressively in India, increasing consumption. Risk of a public health crisis due to rise in lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, especially among children.

Global Example: Mexico's NAFTA Mistake Under NAFTA (1992), Mexico saw: Surge in cheap sugary drinks and junk food imports. Rise in diet-related diseases. Situation

improved only after strong actions like: Soda tax (2014). Front-of-Pack warning labels. India's Weak Public Health Regulation India has no strong rules to restrict HFSS food marketing. Lacks: Binding laws for junk food ads targeting children. Strong penalties for misleading ads. Relies on voluntary codes (Advertising Standards Council of India). Ads using celebrities, cartoon mascots, and sports stars mislead children. Even though many celebrities do not use the products they endorse.

U.K.'s Better Regulation of HFSS Foods Ban on HFSS ads on TV before 9 PM and all paid online ads (from Oct 2025). Uses Traffic Light Labelling (green = healthy, red = unhealthy). Helps consumers make informed choices. Problems with India's Food Labelling Policy India's FOPNL (Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labelling) is still pending. Authorities favour a "star rating" system, which can be confusing and misleading. Experts suggest using clear warning labels (e.g., Chile's black octagon model). In April 2025, Supreme Court ordered a decision on warning labels in a time-bound manner. Delays are linked to industry lobbying weakening draft rules.

Lifestyle Disease Burden in India Obesity, diabetes, hypertension rising in all age groups. UPF (Ultra-Processed Foods) and HFSS items growing at 13.3% CAGR (2011–21). A June 2025 health position paper (by 29 organisations) called for: Mandatory warning labels on unhealthy food. Strict control over HFSS and UPF consumption. Commercial Determinants of Health Commercial activities, like trade and advertising, can harm public health. Global health agencies now recognise such commercial actions as key factors in non-communicable diseases. Upcoming Trade Deals May Repeat the Risk India may sign India–EFTA TEPA in October 2025 (with Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Switzerland). More FTAs expected in future. Economic gain vs. public health loss must be balanced.

What India Should Do Now FTA legal text is still being prepared opportunity to add health safeguards. Strong steps needed: Ban junk food ads targeting children. Enforce mandatory warning labels. Follow Economic Survey 2024–25 and Dietary Guidelines for Indians (2024). Introduce: “HFSS boards” in schools (instead of only sugar/oil

boards). Ban on packaged junk food in school/college canteens. Health professionals must get involved in trade negotiations. Public health must become a national priority, especially as FTAs increase.

What are Cabezudos?

Cabezudos (literally “big-heads” in Spanish) are costumed figures worn by performers during cultural festivals, especially in Spain. They have oversized, cartoonish papier-mâché heads, often paired with a costume covering the rest of the body. Usually represent: Historical or local characters Mythical figures Famous personalities Symbolic roles (like kings, peasants, demons, etc.)

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Conflict Between Thailand and Cambodia

Historical Background of the Dispute The core of the dispute revolves around Preah Vihear Temple, a 9th-century Hindu temple located on a cliff in the Dângrêk Mountains. The Khmer Empire (which ruled much of Southeast Asia, including present-day Cambodia and Thailand) built the temple. After the fall of the Khmer Empire, the region's

boundaries were unclear, leading to overlapping claims between modern Cambodia and Thailand. Colonial Influence and the 1904–1907 Treaties In the early 20th century, Thailand (then Siam) and French Indochina (which included Cambodia) signed treaties to demarcate the border. In 1907, a map created by French surveyors placed Preah Vihear Temple within Cambodian territory. Thailand later disputed the validity of this map, claiming the temple was on Thai soil.

International Court of Justice (ICJ) Ruling – 1962 In 1962, Cambodia took the case to the ICJ. The ICJ ruled that Preah Vihear Temple lies within Cambodian territory, citing that Thailand had accepted the map without objection for decades. Thailand accepted the ruling but did not resolve disputes over the surrounding 4.6 square kilometers of land. **UNESCO Listing and Escalation of Tensions (2008)** In 2008, UNESCO designated Preah Vihear as a World Heritage Site, at Cambodia's request. Thailand objected, claiming that the listing threatened Thai sovereignty over the surrounding land. This led to military buildups, diplomatic protests, and border clashes. **Domestic Politics and Nationalism**

In both countries, the issue became politically sensitive: In Thailand, nationalist groups used the issue to stir anti Cambodian sentiment. Cambodian politicians portrayed the conflict as a defense of national pride. The conflict was often used to divert attention from internal political issues.

Second ICJ Ruling – 2013 Cambodia returned to the ICJ in 2011, asking for clarification of the 1962 judgment. In November 2013, the ICJ ruled that: Cambodia has sovereignty over the whole promontory where the temple is located. Thailand must withdraw any military or police forces stationed there. Both countries accepted the ruling and started peaceful negotiations.

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India Signs Historic Trade Deal with UK

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer signed the much-anticipated Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in London on July 24, 2025. This marks India's first major FTA in over a decade and the UK's fourth since its exit from the European Union (EU) in 2020

The India-UK FTA is expected to deliver wide-ranging economic

advantages by expanding trade in goods and services. Beyond market access, the pact aims to promote professional mobility, strengthen regulatory cooperation, and boost cross-border investment. India seeks to scale up its exports and accelerate growth in key sectors, while the UK secures valuable entry into one of the fastest-growing consumer markets in the world.

Category	India's gains	UK's gains
Export sectors	Tariff elimination for textiles, apparel, gems, jewelry, leather, machinery, auto parts, pharma, agri-products, chemicals, processed foods, and marine products. Expected 20–40 percent rise in exports in key sectors.	Duty-free access for 64 percent of exports to India. Key gains in alcoholic beverages, cosmetics, processed food, and digital services.
Tariff impact	Zero or reduced tariff for 99 percent of Indian exports to the UK. Stronger position for India vs. other leading export markets such as Bangladesh, Vietnam, and China.	Average Indian import tariff on UK goods drops from 15 percent to 3 percent. Reduction in Scotch whisky tariffs from 150 percent to 30 percent in 10 years.
MSME and regional growth	Export boost in leading manufacturing clusters in Tiruppur, Surat, Ludhiana, Pune, Chennai, Gujarat, West Bengal, Assam, etc.	Market access for UK brands like Diageo, Jaguar, Land Rover, and Aston Martin in India.
Professional mobility	Mutual recognition of professional qualifications. Visa relaxation and social security waivers, saving of INR 40 billion (US\$462.88 million).	The UK services sector gains 60,000 Indian professionals, filling skill gaps in engineering and finance.
Green tech and energy	UK investment in solar, hydrogen, battery technology, and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure.	Strategic entry into India's clean energy market.

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Coral cover in Lakshadweep saw a 50% reduction

Major Findings A 24-year coral reef monitoring study in the Lakshadweep Islands shows coral

cover has reduced by 50% since 1998. Coral cover declined from 37.24% (in 1998) to 19.6% (in 2022). Main Cause: Climate Change Repeated marine heatwaves caused by climate change are the main reason for coral bleaching and death. These heatwaves are linked to El Niño events especially in 1998, 2010, and 2016. Local Factors Matter Too Local environmental conditions like: Wave exposure (how much waves hit the reef), Water depth, and Location of reef all affect how much damage corals suffer and how fast they recover.

Coral Recovery Takes Time Although coral deaths have become less severe in each heatwave, the ability of reefs to recover is slowing down. Recovery happens only after 6 years without a bleaching event. Frequent heatwaves don't give reefs enough time to heal.

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