



By: TA | AP Brief

India cracks down on youth protests



Indian authorities deployed a sweeping security crackdown across New Delhi and detained thousands of protesters Saturday as India's youth "**Cockroach**" movement sought to intensify a nationwide campaign against a contentious **voter list revision** that has fueled anger at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government and election authorities.

Police intercepted demonstrators before they could reach Jantar Mantar, the designated protest site in the heart of India's capital, chasing off some and detaining many others.

Some were dragged away before being bundled into police vehicles and taken to temporary detention centers.

Several "Cockroach" movement leaders were detained before arriving, effectively crippling the protest ahead of its start.

The crackdown extended beyond the protest venue, with police stopping buses, cars and other vehicles at checkpoints on routes into the capital and searching for demonstrators.

Jantar Mantar was barricaded, while anti-riot vehicles equipped with tear gas launchers were stationed along key routes.

Restrictions on mobile internet and access to parts of the city added to the hurdles facing protesters.

Police said Friday they had denied permission for the protest because the request was submitted late.

The **scale of the crackdown** underscored the authorities' determination to disrupt a fast-growing protest campaign that has mobilized thousands of young people, drawn opposition support and intensified scrutiny of Modi.

The protests also come at a politically sensitive time, months after demonstrations led by the "Cockroach" movement over exam paper leaks forced Modi's **education minister to resign** in July.

Police detain leaders and tighten grip around protest site

Leaders of the "Cockroach" movement Abhijeet Dipke, Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka, who were expected to be at the forefront of the protest, were detained after arriving at Delhi airport from Mumbai on Saturday.

A video shared by the "Cockroach Janta Party" on X showed police boarding the aircraft and detaining the three men.

"The pre-planned interception by Delhi Police aims to cripple the leadership of today's peaceful demonstrations before they even reach the protest site," the movement said in a statement.

Loudspeakers around the protest site warned that gatherings of five or more people were banned in parts of New Delhi, as authorities imposed sweeping security restrictions rarely seen in the capital. Journalists also faced restrictions in some areas.

The protests center on India's Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision, which the opposition says has disenfranchised millions of eligible voters

Some protesters nevertheless broke through police cordons, chanting slogans against Modi and election authorities before being detained.

"We are a democracy, yet peaceful protests are being crushed by force. Shouldn't we fight for our rights," said Tanya Negi, a college student who traveled from Mumbai with two friends and arrived early Saturday. "Why is Modi afraid of India's young people?"

The protests center on India's Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision, which the opposition says has disenfranchised millions of eligible voters.

Protesters demand the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and an end to the change, which has removed more than 130 million names from voter lists so far.

The Election Commission and the government reject allegations of voter manipulation, saying the revision is intended to eliminate duplicate and ineligible entries.