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There is no clearly discernible rationale behind EC recommendation to ban opinion polls

The Election Commission (EC) has proposed an amendment to the 1950 Representation of the People Act (RPA) to ban all opinion polls once the election process is underway, which could be months before actual elections are held. Following the passing of the 2009 RPA (second amendment) Bill, a ban on exit polls conducted while the polling process is going on is already in place. While there may be a case for banning opinion polls or their republication while polling is actually underway and poll campaigning has ceased, why all opinion polls should be banned is unclear. Nevertheless major political parties such as the Congress and the BJP argued for this at last year's consultations on electoral reform, and the EC appears to have succumbed.

Proponents of the ban argue, contradictorily, that, opinion polls tend to influence voters and voting patterns besides creating confusion galore. The EC has also drawn attention to complaints about political parties funding some opinion polls. But such a draconian ban on all opinion polls is tantamount to muzzling freedom of expression, as well as the right of media and research organisations to undertake such pre-poll exercises. These, after all, are an important metric to assess people's mood and their aspirations, and their perception of political parties. Multiple opinion polls competing with each other restrict the possibility of manipulation by any one pre-poll survey. Finally, the perception that voters are gullible enough to be duped by opinion polls, is an affront to their intelligence and political sense.