

FOR A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON ELECTION REFORMS

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Elections, Election Commission and the Electoral Reforms in India Incl. Political Parties

Even as electoral democracy has taken strong root in India, there is no gainsaying the fact that some unhealthy patterns have emerged. While voter electoral participation has remained robust, with the poor voting in large numbers, candidates and winners in Assembly and Lok Sabha polls have largely been from affluent sections — some even with several criminal cases against them. With elections becoming expensive, most parties have sought to field richer candidates irrespective of their merit in representing public interest. Current campaign finance regulations by the Election Commission of India that seek transparency on expenses by party and candidate, and prescribe limits on a candidate's expenditure, have not been sufficient deterrents. Poll results have tended to be a function of either party or leader preference by the voter rather than a statement on the capability of the candidate. In many cases, capable candidates stand no chance against the money power of more affluent candidates. News that the ECI is considering tightening ways to cap the expenditure of parties is therefore quite welcome, as it should provide a more level playing field. But even this can be meaningful only if there is more transparency in campaign finance which suggests that the electoral bonds system, as it is in place now, is untenable. The ECI has also suggested bringing social media and print media under the "silent period" ambit after campaigning ends. Regulating social media will be difficult and it remains to be seen how the ECI will implement this.

Read | [Election Commission of India unveils roadmap for revamp](#)

The ECI's plans to introduce new "safe and secure" voting methods, however, need thorough scrutiny. The use now of the EVM as a standalone, one-time programmable chip-based system, along with administrative safeguards renders it a safe mechanism that is not vulnerable to hacking. Any other "online" form of voting that is based on networked systems should be avoided. The idea of an Aadhaar-linked remote voting system that is sought to be built as a prototype could be problematic considering how the unique identity card has excluded genuine beneficiaries when used in welfare schemes, not to mention the inherent vulnerabilities in its recognition mechanisms. Two key measures are missing from the recommendations — the need for more teeth for the ECI in its fight against "vote buying" and hate speech. Increasingly, parties have resorted to bribing voters in the form of money and other commodities in return for votes, and while the ECI has tried to warn outfits or in some cases postponed polls, these have not deterred them. In times when hate speech is used during elections, the ECI has only managed to rap the offending candidates or party spokespersons on the knuckles but stricter norms including disqualification of the candidate would be needed for true deterrence.

You have reached your limit for free articles this month.

Register to The Hindu for free and get unlimited access for 30 days.

Already have an account ? [Sign in](#)

Sign up for a 30-day free trial. [Sign Up](#)

Find mobile-friendly version of articles from the day's newspaper in one easy-to-read list.

Enjoy reading as many articles as you wish without any limitations.

A select list of articles that match your interests and tastes.

Move smoothly between articles as our pages load instantly.

A one-stop-shop for seeing the latest updates, and managing your preferences.

We brief you on the latest and most important developments, three times a day.

*Our Digital Subscription plans do not currently include the e-paper ,crossword, iPhone, iPad mobile applications and print. Our plans enhance your reading experience.

Why you should pay for quality journalism - [Click to know more](#)

Please enter a valid email address.

From the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, to the landmark Ayodhya verdict, 2019 proved to be an eventful year.

Subscribe to The Hindu now and get unlimited access.

Already have an account? [Sign In](#)

Sign up for a 30-day free trial. [Sign Up](#)

To continue enjoying The Hindu, You can turn off your ad blocker or [Subscribe to The Hindu](#).

[Sign up for a 30 day free trial.](#)

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

Crack