

CHAPTER 15

EXIT POLL

PART I : GENERAL

15.1 This chapter sets out the guidelines for the conduct, publication and broadcast of exit polls to avoid unfair interference with the election process by unduly influencing electors. The aim is to ensure that elections are conducted honestly and fairly.

PART II : CONDUCT OF EXIT POLLS

15.2 The EAC appeals to the media and organisations concerned for self-regulation, goodwill and voluntary cooperation in the conduct, publication and broadcast of exit polls so that elector behaviour will not be unduly affected.

15.3 Exit polls may be conducted by any person or organisation. For the purpose of better control of the conduct of exit poll, persons or organisations intending to conduct exit polls must provide the following to REO at **the latest 7 days before the polling day**:

- (a) the name and address of the person or organisation intending to conduct exit poll on the polling day;

- (b) the identity document number and name of the person responsible together with his telephone number(s) for contact, especially for the polling hours; and
- (c) a list showing the number of persons who will be employed for the conduct of exit poll at each polling station on the polling day together with the identity document number and name of each of all the persons who will be so employed.

15.4 On the receipt of the application, the REO will consider the application and issue approval to the concerned person or organisation as appropriate. A list of such persons or organisations allowed to conduct exit poll will be announced to the public prior to the polling day for the reference of the public and candidates and such a list will also be displayed at the respective polling stations.

15.5 Interviews are not allowed inside polling stations. Interviewers should note that canvassing activity is prohibited under criminal sanction within the NCZ except door-to-door canvassing activities on the storeys above or below street level in a building other than one in which there is a polling station provided that permission has been obtained for entry to the building for canvassing votes, such activities do not pose any obstruction to electors and no amplifying device is used. Interviewers must therefore be extremely careful in conducting exit poll so as not to give rise to any suspicion that they are canvassing electors inside the NCZ. Interviewers, like any other person, are not allowed to stay or loiter in the areas designated as the NSZ (within the NCZ but immediately outside the entrance to each polling station) [s 41 of the EAC (EP) (LC) Reg]. Interviewers are also not allowed to accost electors in the NSZ. All these measures are for the purpose of securing safe and smooth passage of electors into and out of polling stations. The PRO of a polling

station may, if circumstances require, designate an area outside the exit of the polling station so that interviewers may only conduct exit poll within that area.

15.6 Any announcement of results of exit polls or predictions, particularly in relation to any individual candidate or GC list, during the polling hours may affect elector behaviour and have an impact on election results. The EAC, therefore, appeals to the media and organisations concerned to refrain from announcing the results of exit polls or making specific remarks or predictions on the performance of individual candidate or GC list **until after the close of poll.**

15.7 Broadcasters' attention is invited to the provisions of the Television and Radio Code of Practice on Programme Standards which require news and current affairs programmes to be fair, objective and impartial.

PART III : SECRECY OF THE VOTE

15.8 **The ballot is secret.** It is an elector's right to keep his vote secret. An elector does not have to disclose his choice of candidate/GC list if he does not want to. It is a criminal offence for a person, without lawful authority, to require, or purport to require, an elector or authorised representative of a corporate elector to disclose the name of, or any particular relating to, the candidate/GC list for whom the elector voted at an election. [S 60 of the LCO.] Those who conduct exit polls must respect the electors' right and wish not to be disturbed.

PART IV : IDENTIFICATION OF INTERVIEWERS

15.9 There had been occasions where exit poll interviewers were mistaken to be government officials or polling staff. Such interviewers are therefore required to wear an identification device so that electors will not be misled into thinking that they are appointed by Government.

15.10 After receipt of the information referred to in para. 15.3 above, the REO will notify the organisation or person concerned to collect a number of identification device bearing the name of the organisation that is required to be worn by each of the persons included in the list in para. 15.3(c) above when conducting an exit poll. Any person not wearing such a device or wearing such a device without the identity of the organisation being shown will not be allowed to conduct an exit poll outside any polling station.

PART V : SANCTION

15.11 Apart from the criminal sanction provided in the LCO, if the EAC comes to know that any broadcaster or organisation has failed to heed or comply with the guidelines in this chapter, it may make a reprimand or censure in a public statement which may include the name of the broadcaster or the organisation concerned.