EC seeks statutory backing to collect voters' Aadhaar numbers

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Election Commission has requested the government to give it statutory backing to collect Aadhaar numbers of existing and new voters, which will help it weed out duplicate entries in electoral rolls. In a letter to the law ministry, the commission proposed that provisions of the Representation of the People Act be amended to allow the EC to seek Aadhaar numbers of those applying to be voters and those already part of voters list.

In August 2015, a Supreme Court order on Aadhaar card had put brakes on EC's National Electoral Roll Purification and Authentication Programme (NERPAP) — under which the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) Aadhaar numbers would be linked to electoral photo identity cards

Photo for representation

'PURIFYING' VOTER ROLLS

(EPIC) database to 'purify' electoral rolls.

Seeking to make the voters' list error-free, EC had in March 2015 embarked on an ambitious project to link Aadhaar numbers with voters' electoral data. The seeding of Aadhaar number with EPIC under NERPAP would weed out fraudulent entries (duplicate, bogus, ineligible and shifted voters) from the database, making the rolls pure and error-free.

However, five months after its launch, NERPAP was suspended by EC in wake of a Supreme Court order dated August 2015 that the unique identification number could be used for only PDS and LPG schemes. More recently, however, Supreme Court made clear that statutory backing would be required to collect Aadhaar number.

"Since the SC order makes it clear that sanction of law is required to collect Aadhaar number, the commission has proposed changes in the electoral law," according to an EC functionary.

Under NERPAP, voters could feed their Aadhaar number online using the national voters service portal or through a mobile application. The facility of feeding one's Aadhaar data by sending a simple SMS/email to a designated number of email address or making a call was made available. Alternatively, the details of one's Aadhaar and EPIC could be submitted in hard copy along with photocopies of both the documents.