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SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS-AN OVERVIEW

Published On: 12-07-2025

Simultaneous Elections

‘Simultaneous Elections in India’ refer to the idea of holding Lok Sabha

(parliamentary) and State legislative assembly elections together, with the aim of reducing the frequency of elections and their associated costs.

The high-level committee, led by **former President Ram Nath Kovind**, recommended simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies as the first step and municipal and panchayat polls within 100 days of the general election as the second phase. The Union Cabinet accepted the committee’s recommendations

Constitutional Provisions

1 article 83-durations of house of parliament -for lok sabha it is 5 years unless it is dissolved.

2 Article 172-duration of state legislative assemblies as 5 years unless dissolve

Arguments Against One Nation One Election

- **Hamper federalism:** It undermines the fundamental principle of federalism, which constitutes a basic component of our Constitutional structure.
- **Logistical Challenges:** All states and the central government faces massive logistical challenges including coordinating the schedules, resources etc.
- **Regional Variations:** Synchronizing elections may not account for these regional variations adequately.
- **Financial Implications:** Conducting elections is expensive and require significant resources, like Manpower.
- **Issue of dissolution:** Prematurely dissolution on account of a vote of no-confidence.
- **Holding simultaneous elections for the whole country has many practical difficulties for the Election Commission.** It raises the question, if the ruling party holds an absolute majority in all 29 states. Thus, whether new elections would be required.
- **Disadvantage for regional parties:** It will help the dominant national party or the incumbent at the Centre.

Synchronizing Simultaneous Elections in India

The law Commission Recommendation (2018) for restoring simultaneous elections in India: –

- **According to The Law Commission report 2018** – appropriate amendments to the Constitution, the Representation of the People Act 1951, the Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies is required.

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- *Further, the commission also recommended that at least 50% of the states should ratify the constitutional amendments.*

oExample: – Amendments required in five Articles of the Constitution, namely Articles 83, 85, 172, 174, and 356.

- ***The no-confidence motion can be replaced** with a constructive vote of no- confidence through amendments in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha rules of business.*

- ***Anti-Defection law** may be rightfully diluted to prevent stalemate in case of a hung Assembly or Parliament.*

- *Statutory limit of six months for issuance of notification of general elections can be extended for securing flexibility as a **one-time measure**.*

3Issues Involved in Simultaneous Elections:

- ***Constitutional Challenges:** Imposing of President's Rule could be misused to maintain synchronization.*

- ***Logistical Challenges:** India's vast electorate of over 96 crore electors (2024) requires over one million polling booths and significant security resources.*

oConducting simultaneous elections could strain administrative capacity.

- ***Concerns Regarding Federalism:** Constitutional Amendments concerning the term of the state legislative assemblies under Article 172 can be carried out without ratification by states. Thus, opinion and say of States is reduced.*

- ***Impact on Voter Behavior:** Simultaneous elections may lead to a "nationalization" of local issues, with voters prioritizing national parties over regional concerns, weakening the voice of smaller parties.*

- ***Legal and Parliamentary Requirements:** Amendments to multiple constitutional*

provisions (e.g., Articles 83, 172, 327) and changes to the Representation of the People Act, 1951 are required.

- ***Political accountability:** Frequent elections hold lawmakers accountable, while fixed terms may provide unwarranted stability without performance scrutiny challenging democratic principles.*

Measures for Simultaneous Elections in India

- ***Pilot Projects:** India can consider conducting pilot projects in a few states to test the feasibility and gather data on the challenges and benefits.*

- ***Constitutional Amendments:** If succeed in pilot project, the government can amend the Constitution to allow for simultaneous elections*

- ***Election Finance Reforms:** Implement financial reforms to manage the increased cost like separate election fund, promoting transparency in political funding etc.*

- ***Political Consensus:** Achieving a consensus among political parties is crucial to formulate a workable plan for simultaneous elections.*

- ***Public Awareness:** Educate the public about the benefits of simultaneous elections such as reduced campaign expenditure, less disruption etc*