



## SIMULTANEOUS POLLS - GS II MAINS

**Q.** What do you mean by 'One Nation, One Election' in the Indian context? Is it feasible in the present federal clashes? Substantiate your views. (15 marks, 250 words)

**News:** *High level Committee submits its report on One Nation, One Election- Simultaneous Elections core to Aspirational India*

### What's in the news?

- The High-level Committee (HLC) on One Nation, One Election submitted its report to President Droupadi Murmu.
- The report said that simultaneous elections would lead to a fundamental transformation in the electoral process and overall governance.

### Key takeaways:

- The HLC, popularly known as the Kovind panel after its chairman, former President Ram Nath Kovind, was constituted in September 2023.

### One Nation One Election:

- The concept of "One Nation, One Election" envisions a system in which all state and Lok Sabha elections must be held simultaneously.
- This will entail restructuring the Indian election cycle so that elections to the states and the centre coincide.
- This would imply that voters will vote for members of the LS and state assemblies on the same day and at the same time (or in a phased manner as the case may be).

### Key Recommendations of the HLC:

#### 1. Simultaneous Election by 2029:

- The panel recommended amending the Constitution so elections for the Lok Sabha, all state assemblies and local bodies can be held by 2029.

#### 2. Amending the Constitution (two steps):

- In all, 18 amendments to the Constitution and other statutes have been suggested.
- **First Step:**
  - In the first step, simultaneous elections will be held to Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.
  - To achieve synchronisation at the first step, the government should take a one-time step where they pick a specific date after a Lok Sabha election.
  - After this date, the terms of all state assemblies that have elections will end along with Parliament's term.



- To effect these changes, the panel has recommended amendments to Article 83 (duration of Houses of Parliament) and Article 172 (duration of State legislatures) of the Constitution.
- For this, no ratification by the states will be required for the constitutional amendment.
- **Second Step:**
  - In the second step, elections to municipalities and the panchayats will be synchronised with elections to Lok Sabha and state Assemblies.
  - This will be done in such a way that local body elections are held within 100 days of the elections to Lok Sabha and state Assemblies.
  - This will require ratification by not less than one-half of the states.

### 3. Insertion of Article 324A:

- The committee recommended an Article 324A, which states that Parliament may make a law to ensure that elections to municipalities and panchayats be held together with General Elections.

### 4. Single Electoral Roll and Election ID:

- To make single electoral roll and electoral photo identity cards for use in elections to all the three tiers of government, the committee recommended that Article 325 of the Constitution be amended.
- Then only, Election Commission of India can prepare a single electoral roll and election ID in consultation with the State Election Commissions.
- These amendments will require ratification by not less than one-half of the states.

### 5. In case of Hung House:

- In the event of a hung House, a no-confidence motion, or any such event, fresh elections should be held to constitute the new Lok Sabha or state Assembly for the unexpired term of the House.

### 6. Meeting Logistics Requirement:

- The committee suggests that the Election Commission of India should plan ahead with State Election Commissions for things like manpower, polling staff, security forces, and voting machines to ensure fair elections across all levels of government at the same time.

### 7. Rejected Germany Model:

- Rejected the Germany model of bringing no-confidence motion against a government
- The committee rejected the concept of constructive vote of no-confidence, which is the model in Germany.
- In this model, to bring a no-confidence motion against a government, a positive vote of confidence in an alternate leader or government is required.
- The committee said that the prevailing Parliamentary practice in this regard is appropriate and does not require any change.



- Making a motion of no confidence by the Members of Parliament is not only their right, but also their responsibility. The Committee would not like to dilute this feature of the Indian Parliamentary system.

## Need for Simultaneous Elections:

Need for simultaneous elections arises because of the problems associated with frequent elections:

- The **massive expenditure** that is currently incurred for the conduct of separate elections.
- The **policy paralysis** that results from the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct during election time.
- **Impact on delivery of essential services.**
- **Burden on crucial manpower** that is deployed during election time.
- **Destabilises the duly elected governments** and imposed a heavy burden on the exchequer.
- Puts **pressure on political parties**, especially smaller ones, as elections are becoming increasingly expensive.
- **Increases the cost of management to the election commission.**

## Merits of Simultaneous Elections:

### 1. Governance and consistency:

- The ruling parties will be able to focus on legislation and governance rather than having to be in campaign mode forever.

### 2. Reduced Expenditure of Money and Administration:

- The entire State and District level administrative and security machinery will be busy with the conduct of elections twice in a period of five years as per the current practice.
- Expenditure can be reduced by conducting simultaneous elections.

### 3. Continuity in policies and programmes.

### 4. Efficiency of Governance:

- Simultaneous elections can bring the much-needed operational efficiency in this exercise.
- Populist measures by governments will reduce.

### 5. Curbs Corruption:

- Simultaneous elections can also be a means to curb corruption and build a more conducive socio-economic ecosystem.
- The impact of black money on the voters will be reduced as all elections are held at a time.

### 6. Impact on social fabric:

- Frequent elections perpetuate caste, religion, and communal issues across the country as elections are polarising events that have accentuated casteism, communalism and corruption.



## Complications:

Several practical difficulties are as follows.

### 1. Confused Voters:

- Not all voters are highly educated to know who to vote for - assembly or parliament elections.

### 2. Create gap between voters and their representatives:

- Frequent elections bring the politicians back to the voters, create jobs {though temporary} and prevent the mixing of local and national issues in the minds of the voters.

### 3. Logistics issues:

- The issue of logistics and requirement of security personnel, election and administrative officials needs to be considered.
- There is a dearth of enough security and administrative officials to conduct simultaneous free and fair elections throughout the country in one go.

### 4. Against multi-party democracy:

- India is a multi-party democracy where elections are held for State Assemblies and the Lok Sabha separately.
- The voters are better placed to express their voting choices keeping in mind the two different governments which they would be electing by exercising their franchise.
- This distinction gets blurred somewhat when voters are made to vote for electing two types of government at the same time, at the same polling booth, and on the same day.

### 5. Anti-federal:

- Assembly elections are fought on local issues and, in the true spirit of federalism, parties and leaders are judged in the context of their work done in the state.
- Clubbing them with the general election could lead to a situation where the national narrative submerges the regional story.
- This could mean a regress for the federal character of the polity, which is best avoided.

### 6. Consensus among political parties:

- The biggest challenge to simultaneous polls lies in getting the party political consensus needed to bring an amendment in the law.
- Achieving an all party consensus is not easy.