



## PM on One Nation, One Election

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### Why in News

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Recently, the Prime Minister of India has addressed the concluding session of the **80<sup>th</sup> All India Presiding Officers Conference** via videoconference, at **Kevadiya** (Gujarat) on the occasion of **Constitution Day (26<sup>th</sup> November)**.

- He raised the pitch for '**One Nation, One Election**', a **single voter list** for all polls and also asked the presiding officers to **simplify the language of statute books** and allow for an **easier process to weed out redundant laws**.
- He also paid tributes to the security forces and appreciated **India's efforts to fight terrorism**. The day marked **12 years of the Mumbai terror attacks**.

### Key Points

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- **One Nation, One Election:**

- The idea is about structuring the Indian election cycle in a manner so that **elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies are synchronised** together so that the **election to both can be held within a given span** of time.
- **Advantages:**
  - Help **keep a check on the poll expenses**, party expenses, etc. and also save public money.
  - **Reduce the burden** on administrative setup and security forces.
  - **Ensure timely implementation** of the government policies and also ensure that the administrative machinery is engaged in developmental activities rather than electioneering.
  - **Solve the problem of governance** on the part of the politicians who are ruling. It is generally seen that for short term political gains from a particular assembly election, ruling politicians avoid taking a harsh long term decision which can ultimately help the country in the long run.
  - **Provide more time to all the stakeholders** i.e. political parties, **Election Commission of India** (ECI), paramilitary forces, civilians for the preparation of elections once in five years.
- **Challenges:**
  - The synchronisation is a major problem **considering the traditions and conventions that India's Parliamentary system follows**. The government is accountable to the Lower House and it is possible that the government can fall before completing its term and the moment the government falls, there has to be an election.
  - It is **difficult to convince and bring together all the political parties** on the idea.
  - For holding simultaneous elections, the **requirements for Electronic Voting Machines** (EVMs) and the **Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails** (VVPATs) **will double** as the ECI has to provide two sets (one for election to the Legislative Assembly and second for that to the Lok Sabha).
  - There will also be an **additional requirement of the polling staff and for better security arrangements**.

- **Suggestions:**
  - India held the elections for the assembly as well as the Lok Sabha from 1951-52 to till 1967. As such, therefore, there are **no disagreements on adequacy and efficacy** of the idea. India **can even think of holding elections at the same time even for the local bodies.**
  - To sync the term of the State Legislative Assemblies with that of the Lok Sabha, the **term of the state legislative assemblies can be reduced and increased accordingly.** However, to do so, **constitutional amendments** may be needed in **Articles 83, 85, 172, 174 and 356.**
  - In India, **fixing the dates is not feasible** because of the Parliamentary form of government so one **radical solution is to switch to the Presidential form of Government** where the President is not accountable to the House.
  - **Synchronising only the elections to the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.**
- **One Voter List:**
  - Only one voter list should be used for Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and other elections.
  - **Advantages:**

A common electoral roll will **save an enormous amount of effort and expenditure** as the preparation of a separate voters list causes duplication of the effort and the expenditure.
  - **Challenges:**
    - **Persuading the state governments to tweak their respective laws and adopt the ECI voters list** for municipal and panchayat polls.
    - Requires a **massive consensus-building exercise.**
  - **Suggestions:**
    - The mature approach calls for the option of **states adopting EC's voter list.**
    - The EC's voters list has to be made in a way **to fit the State Election Commissions' wards which is a tedious task** but can be done by the use of technology.

### All India Presiding Officers Conference

- It began in **1921**, and the **Gujarat event marks its centenary year.**
- **Theme for 2020:** 'Harmonious Coordination between Legislature, Executive and Judiciary: Key to a Vibrant Democracy'.

It **emphasises on the need for coordination between all three wings of the state**, viz. Legislature, Executive and Judiciary and **suggests them to be guided by the Constitution** which mentions their role to their decorum.

### Way Forward

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- Elections are held at different places every few months and it hampers the developmental work. Therefore, it's a must to have a deep study and deliberation on the idea in order to prevent the impact of the **model code of conduct** on development works every few months.
- There needs to be a consensus on whether the country needs one nation, one poll or not. All political parties should at least cooperate in debating this issue, once the debate starts, the public opinion can be taken into consideration. India being a mature democracy, can then follow the outcome of the debate.

**Source: TH**