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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. Indian democracy is marked by perennial election process which hinders governance aspect. Analyze. (150 words)

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Approach

- Introduce with frequency of elections being conducted in India
- In body discuss the impact of frequent elections
- Conclude with suggestions to overcome the

Answer

Introduction

- After the Independence, India conducted its first election in 1950. At that time the election to state assemblies and the parliaments occurred at every five years and were simultaneous.
- The cycle of simultaneous elections was disrupted after 1967. The rise of regional parties, indiscriminate use of Article 356 of the Constitution (Governor's rule in states) and coming of the era of coalition rules contributed to disruptions of simultaneous elections.
- At present, the situation is that at least one part of the country is witnessing an election throughout any given year. In a span of three years (2014-2016) the country witnessed one general election and 15 State Assembly elections.

Impact on governance

- **Public Exchequer:**
 - Frequent elections lead to massive expenditure by Government and other stakeholders to conduct, control and supervise elections.
 - Expenditure is also done by Election commission of India in conducting elections setting up polling stations, preparing electoral roll, buying indelible ink etc.
 - Besides the Government, candidates contesting elections and the political parties to whom they belong also incur huge expenditure.
 - There is a duplication of the expenditure incurred by the candidates contesting elections and political parties which results in the pumping in of considerable resources, thereby indirectly affecting money supply in the economy.
- **Deployment of Security Forces:** A large number of security personnel are deployed to provide security during elections. This leads to a lock-in of security forces and takes away a big portion of such armed police force from the core responsibilities of these forces.

- **Use of Government Officials and Premises:** The polling booths are most often located in schools, whether Government or private. The school staff and teaching personnel are directed to proceed for election duties, compromising their primary duty of imparting education.
- **Governance gets affected:** Governments lay policies with an eye on elections with more focus on populist measures rather than on resolving real issues with long term sustainable solution.
- **Model Code of Conduct (MCC):** The model code of conduct is imposed as soon as the elections are announced. Imposition of the MCC refrains the Government from (i) announcing any financial grants in any form or promises thereof; (ii) laying foundation stones etc., of projects or schemes (iii) or make any promise of construction of roads, provision of drinking water facilities, etc. Due to this all other normal functions and activities of the Government, including developmental work, are pushed to the background. These create a lot of hardships and sufferings to the common man.

Way forward

- To prevent the perennial cycle of elections in the country, Law Commission, NITI Aayog has suggested conducting simultaneous elections.
- Simultaneous elections can be a solution to prevent the country from being in constant election mode.
- However, the issues that may crop in simultaneous elections like central issues overshadowing regional problems, federal issues, changes in constitution etc. need to be discussed and resolved amicably with stakeholders.