



High-Level Committee Report on Simultaneous Elections

For Prelims: [Simultaneous Elections](#), [Municipalities and Panchayats](#), [Election Commission of India](#), [State Election Commissions](#), [Article 356](#)

For Mains: Simultaneous Elections, Significance and Challenges

Source: [PIB](#)

Why in News?

In a significant move towards electoral reform, the [High-level Committee on Simultaneous Elections](#), constituted under the **chairmanship of Shri Ram Nath Kovind**, former President of India, has proposed simultaneous elections for [Lok Sabha](#), state Assemblies, and local bodies in India.

- The committee's report, submitted to President Droupadi Murmu, outlines comprehensive recommendations and amendments to the Constitution to facilitate this monumental change.

What are the Recommendations of the High-level Committee on Simultaneous Elections?

- **Transition to Simultaneous Elections:**
 - **Amendment to Article 82A:**
 - The Committee suggests amending **Article 82A of the Constitution** to empower the President to designate an **"Appointed Date"** for the commencement of simultaneous elections to the House of the People and Legislative Assemblies.
 - State assemblies going to poll after this date would synchronize their terms with the Parliament, facilitating simultaneous elections.
 - **Term Synchronization:**
 - If the recommendations are accepted and implemented after the **2024 Lok Sabha polls**, the first simultaneous elections could potentially be held in 2029.
 - Alternatively, if targeting the 2034 polls, the appointed date would be identified after the 2029 Lok Sabha polls.
 - States with elections due between **June 2024 and May 2029** would see their terms expire alongside the **18th Lok Sabha**, even if it results in some state assemblies **having terms of less than five years as a one-time measure**.
 - States like West Bengal, Tamil Nadu (2026), Punjab, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh (2027), and Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Telangana (2028) would synchronise their election cycles.
 - The government elected after the 2024 polls would decide on the starting point for implementing simultaneous elections, either targeting 2029 or 2034 based on their preference.
 - To maintain synchronicity **in case of premature dissolution** of Parliament or a state assembly, the committee recommended **conducting fresh elections only for the remaining term, or the "unexpired term"** until the next cycle of

simultaneous polls.

- This measure ensures that any hung House or **no-confidence motion** does not affect the overall timeline for simultaneous elections.

▪ **Synchronisation of Local Body Elections:**

- Parliament is advised to enact legislation, possibly through the **introduction of Article 324A**, to ensure the synchronization of **Municipalities and Panchayats elections with General Elections**.
- This legislation would determine the terms of local bodies and align their election schedules with national electoral timelines.

▪ **Electoral Roll Preparation and Management:**

- The Committee suggests amending **Article 325 of the Constitution** to enable the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** to prepare a **single electoral roll and Elector's Photo Identity Card (EPIC)** applicable to all tiers of government in consultation with State Election Commissions.
 - The electoral rolls for Lok Sabha are prepared and maintained by the ECI, while the electoral rolls for local bodies are prepared by the SEC.
 - The Committee emphasises the importance of harmonisation between the ECI and **State Election Commissions (SECs)** to prevent duplication and safeguard voter rights.

▪ **Logistical Arrangements and Expenditure Estimation:**

- The Committee calls for the ECI to submit detailed requirements and **expenditure estimates for simultaneous elections**.
- To ensure seamless logistical arrangements, the Committee urges the ECI and SECs to develop comprehensive plans and estimates.
 - These plans should encompass equipment needs, personnel deployment, and security measures.

▪ **Impact on Governance and Development:**

- The Committee underscores the importance of certainty in governance for effective decision-making and sustained development.
- It highlights the role of synchronized elections in averting policy paralysis and fostering a conducive environment for progress.

What are the Debates Regarding Simultaneous Elections?

▪ **Arguments in Favour:**

◦ **Cost Efficiency:**

- Holding simultaneous elections **reduces the substantial recurring expenditure** incurred by both the State and Central governments.
- Consolidating elections into **one event minimises the costs associated** with voter registration, polling stations, election staff, security deployment, and other logistical requirements.
- With a single electoral roll for all elections, administrative resources such as security forces and civilian officials are utilised more efficiently, saving public funds that can be redirected to other public causes.

◦ **Enhanced Governance and Administration:**

- Simultaneous elections streamline the electoral process, reducing the **strain on governance and administration** caused by frequent elections.
 - Prolonged deployment of security and police forces during separate elections **can strain national security and law enforcement efforts**, which can be alleviated by holding elections simultaneously.
- The **mass-scale transfers of officials and the disruption** caused by the **code of conduct** during separate elections can impede the smooth functioning of government machinery, which can be mitigated through synchronised polls.

◦ **Reduced Influence of Money in Politics:**

- Holding simultaneous elections **can lessen the role of money in politics by reducing the frequency of election campaigns** and associated expenses.
 - Campaign finance regulations can be more effectively enforced by the ECI at a national level, ensuring a level playing field for all parties and candidates.

- **Mitigation of Divisive Politics:**
 - The '[one nation-one election' concept](#) aims to reduce the divisive impact of regionalism, casteism, and communalism in mobilising voters.
 - By focusing on national issues and promoting a unified electoral agenda, simultaneous elections can help transcend narrow interests and foster a sense of national unity.
- **Enhanced Voter Engagement:**
 - **Voter fatigue**, resulting from frequent elections at different levels, can be alleviated by consolidating polls into a single event.
 - Simultaneous elections can potentially **increase voter turnout at the national level** by reducing voter apathy and increasing the significance of each electoral exercise.
- **Arguments Against Simultaneous Elections:**
 - **Federalism and Regional Representation:**
 - Simultaneous elections may undermine the **principles of federalism** by **centralising the electoral process** and potentially overshadowing regional and local issues with national issues.
 - Constituent States, especially those governed by **non-dominant parties at the national level**, may feel **marginalised or inadequately represented** in a synchronised election scenario.
 - National parties could gain an undue advantage over regional parties, undermining the federal spirit enshrined in the Constitution.
 - **Cost Implications:**
 - The implementation of simultaneous elections would require a significant investment in procuring additional [Electronic Voting Machines \(EVMs\)](#) and [Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail Machines \(VVPATs\)](#), adding to the financial burden.
 - Biennial elections to Legislative councils/Rajya Sabha and by-elections would still necessitate separate polling events, contributing to ongoing costs despite synchronised elections.
 - **Impact on Accountability and Representation:**
 - Frequent elections at different levels of government help **maintain accountability among elected representatives** and ensure regular opportunities for voters to express their preferences.
 - Synchronising elections **may reduce the frequency of electoral accountability checks** and limit the responsiveness of elected officials to the evolving needs of their constituents.
 - **Required Constitutional Amendments:**
 - India's parliamentary democracy allows for the dissolution of Lok Sabha and State assemblies before the completion of their five-year terms.
 - Fixed tenure of **five years** for all houses necessitates constitutional amendments to **Articles 83, 85, 172, and 174, dealing with duration and dissolution**.
 - Amendments to Article 356, governing the imposition of President's rule in States, would also be required to accommodate simultaneous elections.
 - **Security Implications:**
 - During simultaneous elections, **deploying large security forces for election duty** could potentially **weaken national security**, as it diverts them from border protection.

What are the Constitutional Provisions Regarding the Simultaneous Elections?

Constitutional Provision	Description
Article 83	Specifies the duration of the Lok Sabha (House of the People), stating that it shall continue for five years from its first meeting unless dissolved earlier.
Article 172	Pertains to the duration of State Legislative Assemblies, declaring that a

	Legislative Assembly shall continue for five years from the date of its first meeting.
Article 324	Empower the ECI to supervise, direct, and control the preparation of electoral rolls and conduct of elections to the Parliament , State Legislatures, and the offices of the President and Vice-President.
Article 356	Allows for the imposition of the President's Rule in a State in case of failure of the constitutional machinery, leading to direct rule by the President through the Governor.
Representation of People Act, 1951	Provides the legal framework for conducting elections in India, covering aspects such as electoral rolls, qualifications for membership, and election conduct.

History of Simultaneous Elections in India

- Simultaneous elections in India, where both the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies are elected together, were practised during the initial years after independence in **1952, 1957, and 1962.**
 - However, due to various factors such as political instability, early dissolution of State Assemblies, and the need for separate elections to address regional issues, the practice of simultaneous elections gradually faded.
- In 2019, only four States (**Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, and Sikkim**) had their assembly elections, along with the Lok Sabha.

Countries with Simultaneous Elections

- South Africa:**
 - Elections to the National Assembly and provincial legislatures occur simultaneously every five years.
 - The President of South Africa is elected by the National Assembly.
- Sweden:**
 - The Prime Minister of Sweden is elected by the legislature every four years.
- Germany:**
 - The Chancellor of Germany is elected by the legislature every four years.
 - Lack of confidence in the Chancellor can only be resolved by electing a successor.
- Britain:**
 - The Fixed-term Parliaments Act, 2011 was passed to provide a sense of stability and predictability to the British Parliament and its tenure. It provided that the first elections would be held on the 7th of May, 2015 and on the first Thursday of May every fifth year thereafter.

What are the Various Other Recommendations Regarding the Simultaneous Elections?

- Previous Reports:**
 - The issue of simultaneous elections has been addressed in reports by the [Law Commission \(1999\)](#), and the [Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice \(2015\)](#). Additionally, the [Law Commission submitted a draft report in 2018](#).
- Recommendations Summary:**
 - Clubbing Elections:**
 - Proposals suggest combining **Lok Sabha elections with nearly half of the State assembly elections in one cycle** while holding the remaining State assembly elections in another cycle after two and a half years.
 - This would require amending the Constitution and the **Representation of**

the People Act, 1951, to adjust the tenures of existing assemblies.

- **No-Confidence Motion:**
 - Any no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly should be accompanied by a **confidence motion for forming an alternate government.**
 - If dissolution of the Lok Sabha or State Assembly is unavoidable, the newly constituted House should serve only the **remainder period of the original House**, discouraging premature dissolution and encouraging exploration of forming an alternate government.
- **Bye-Elections:**
 - Bye-elections due to death, resignation, or disqualification of members can be grouped together and conducted once a year for efficiency.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q1. Consider the following statements: (2020)

1. According to the Constitution of India a person who is eligible to vote can be made a minister in a State for six months even if he/she is not a member of the Legislature of that State.
2. According to the Representation of People Act, 1951, a person convicted of a criminal offense and sentenced to imprisonment for five years is permanently disqualified from contesting an election even after his release from prison.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (d)

Q2. Consider the following statements: (2017)

1. The Election Commission of India is a five-member body.
2. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs decides the election schedule for the conduct of both general elections and bye-elections.
3. Election Commission resolves the disputes relating to splits/mergers of recognised political parties.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

Answer: (d)

Mains

Q.1 'Simultaneous election to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies will limit the amount of time and money spent in electioneering but it will reduce the government's accountability to the people' Discuss. (2017)

