



Simultaneous Elections in India

For Prelims: [Union Cabinet](#), [Simultaneous Elections](#), [Lok Sabha](#), [State Assemblies](#), [One Nation, One Election](#), [Municipalities](#), [Panchayats](#), [Election Commission of India](#), [State Election Commissions](#), [EVMs](#), [VVPATs](#), [Law Commission](#), [Model Code of Conduct](#)

For Mains: Need of simultaneous elections and associated concerns.

[Source:IE](#)

Why in News?

Arvind Panagariya, Chairman of the [16th Finance Commission](#), noted that **frequent elections hinder reforms** and highlighted that the [simultaneous elections](#) improve governance and policy implementation.

What are Simultaneous Elections?

- **About:** Simultaneous elections (One Nation, One Election) refer to conducting elections for the **Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies** at the same time. This does not mean voting happens across the country on the same day, polls can still be held in phases.
 - In the **first four election cycles (1952-1967)**, **Lok Sabha and State assembly polls were held simultaneously**, but repeated premature dissolutions of both Parliament and assemblies later disrupted this cycle, leading to staggered elections.
 - The [Constitution \(129th Amendment\) Bill, 2024](#), and the [Union Territories Laws \(Amendment\) Bill, 2024](#), were introduced following the recommendations of the [High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections, 2023](#) to give effect to "One Nation, One Election."
 - Both bills have been referred to the **Joint Parliamentary Committee** for detailed examination.
- **Key Provisions of the Bills:**
 - **The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024:** Introduces Article 82A to align the terms of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. It empowers the ECI to conduct simultaneous elections and allows the ECI to declare the end date of each State Assembly's term when notifying election schedules.
 - The Bill proposes an **amendment to Article 83**, stipulating that if the Lok Sabha is dissolved before completing its full term, the next Lok Sabha will serve only the unexpired portion of the term.
 - Similar amendments are proposed for **Article 172** regarding the duration of State Legislatures.
 - **Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024:** Proposes amendments to the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, to align the term of Union Territories' Legislative Assemblies with that of

the Lok Sabha.

- [Local bodies \(Municipalities and Panchayats\)](#) are not included in the proposed bill.

High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections, 2023

- The Committee headed by former President **Ram Nath Kovind**, proposed restoring a cycle of **simultaneous polls in two stages**, first synchronising Lok Sabha and state assembly elections, followed by aligning municipal and panchayat polls within 100 days.
- It recommended that to synchronise elections, the President will declare the first sitting of the Lok Sabha as the **“appointed date.”** State assemblies elected after this date will serve only until the next parliamentary polls, ensuring future simultaneous elections.
 - In cases like a hung House or no-confidence motion, fresh polls will be held for the remainder of the term.
- It also called for a **single electoral roll and photo ID system** prepared jointly by the **Election Commission and state election bodies** to ensure smooth conduct of simultaneous polls.

How do Frequent Elections Impact Governance in India?

- **Policy Hesitation:** The Union government may delay reforms, fearing electoral backlash in upcoming state elections.
- **Interrupted Project Implementation:** The [Election Commission of India \(ECI\) Model Code of Conduct \(MCC\)](#) halts procurement, project execution, and policy decisions during election periods.
- **Short-Term Fiscal Focus:** Governments may **focus on populist spending** and subsidies to win votes, rather than long-term fiscal planning.
 - Election cycles spread over five years can multiply fiscal pressure, forcing uneven resource allocation.
- **Identity Politics and Social Fragmentation:** Frequent elections often intensify **identity-based mobilization around caste, class, or religion**, thereby deepening social divisions and weakening long-term national cohesion.
- **Administrative Disruptions:** Bureaucratic functions and consultations, such as those by the **Finance Commission**, can be delayed.
- **Declining Democratic Participation:** Repeated electoral cycles can lead to **voter fatigue, lowering enthusiasm and turnout**, which undermines the quality and inclusiveness of democratic participation.

What is the Need for Simultaneous Elections in India?

- **Promotes Consistency in Governance:** Focus shifts from campaigning to **developmental activities and policy implementation**. Simultaneous elections cut costs associated with multiple election cycles, freeing resources for **economic growth**.
- **Prevents Policy Paralysis:** Reduces prolonged enforcement of the **Model Code of Conduct (MCC)** and allows governments to ensure smoother policy implementation and **better continuity in governance**.
 - Allows parties to dedicate efforts to **public welfare** rather than frequent elections.
- **Mitigates Resource Diversion:** Limits repeated deployment of **polling officials and civil servants**, freeing them for core duties.
- **Enhances Political Opportunities:** Simultaneous elections require more candidates at all levels, giving newer leaders space to emerge and reducing dominance by a few big names, while promoting inclusivity and wider representation within parties.

Committee/Commission Recommendations on Simultaneous Elections in India

- **Election Commission of India (1983):** Recommended holding simultaneous elections for the House of the People (Lok Sabha) and the Legislative Assemblies of States.
- **Law Commission 170th Report (1999):** Suggested methods for simultaneous elections in two phases.
- **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law & Justice (2015) :** Supported the idea, citing cost savings and smoother governance. Emphasised the need for political consensus and gradual implementation
- **Draft Law Commission Report (2018):** The draft report stated that simultaneous elections require constitutional amendments and proposed a two-phase synchronization.

What are the Challenges Associated with Simultaneous Elections?

- **Logistical Burden:** Conducting elections for **over 96 crore voters** at once means managing over **1 million polling booths**, huge security forces, and personnel deployment on a scale never attempted before.
 - Updating electoral rolls, training staff, coordinating security, and running voter education drives across **all states at the same time will be highly complex.**
- **Technology Infrastructure:** In the 2024 elections alone, **1.7 million [Electronic Voting Machines](#)** and **1.8 million [Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails \(VVPATs\)](#)** were used. Simultaneous polls would need even more machines, backups, and foolproof systems.
- **Federal Concerns:** Cutting short or extending the terms of state assemblies for alignment **may weaken the [federal spirit of the Constitution](#).**
- **Accountability:** With fewer election cycles, governments and leaders may face less frequent public scrutiny.
- **Legal Uncertainty:** Amendments and new processes could be challenged in courts, delaying or complicating implementation.
- **Regional Disparities:** Smaller states and regional parties fear being sidelined in **“nationalized” elections**.
 - National issues and big parties may dominate campaigns, reducing focus on local problems and regional parties.
- **Constitutional Amendments Required: Simultaneous elections would need amendments to Articles 83, 85, 172, and 174 to fix the tenure and prevent premature dissolution of Lok Sabha and State assemblies.**
 - Article 356 would also need modification to address issues like [President’s Rule](#), which can dissolve State assemblies prematurely.

What Reforms can Facilitate the Transition to Simultaneous Elections in India?

- **Legal Clarity:** Establish clear procedures, schedules, and necessary constitutional amendments for synchronized elections.
 - Establish clear provisions for handling premature dissolutions and by-elections.
- **Strengthening Electoral Infrastructure:** Create a unified electoral roll for all three tiers, use technology for voter verification and results, and upgrade EVM and VVPAT management.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Educate citizens through nationwide campaigns, NGOs, and community organizations on the benefits and process of simultaneous elections.
- **Capacity Building:** Train election officials on new technologies and procedures to ensure smooth and efficient implementation.
- **Adjust Election Timings:** Advance or postpone certain state elections to synchronize cycles.

Conclusion

The concept of **Simultaneous Elections** represents a significant step toward **streamlined electoral management and efficient governance**. While implementation requires careful constitutional

amendments and political consensus, it promises **administrative efficiency, fiscal prudence, and sustained policy focus**, strengthening India's democratic framework.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. One Nation, One Election could reduce fiscal costs but may undermine federalism. Discuss in light of recent proposals for simultaneous polls.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which one of the following factors constitutes the best safeguard of liberty in a liberal democracy? (2021)

- (a) A committed judiciary
- (b) Centralization of powers
- (c) Elected government
- (d) Separation of powers

Ans: (d)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2021)

In India, there is no law restricting the candidates from contesting in one Lok Sabha election from three constituencies.

In the 1991 Lok Sabha Election, Shri Devi Lal contested from three Lok Sabha constituencies.

As per the existing rules, if a candidate contests in one Lok Sabha election from many constituencies, his/her party should bear the cost of bye-elections to the constituencies vacated by him/her winning in all the constituencies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q. Individual Parliamentarian's role as the national law maker is on a decline, which in turn, has adversely impacted the quality of debates and their outcome. Discuss. **(2019)**

Q. "The local self-government system in India has not proved to be effective instrument of governance". Critically examine the statement and give your views to improve the situation. **(2017)**

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