

Date: 16 August, 2019



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1. PM makes fresh pitch for, “One nation, One Election”.

- What is meant by simultaneous elections?
- Is an idea of simultaneous elections new to India?
- What purpose would simultaneous polls serve, if held?
- What are the possible negative implications of simultaneous elections?

GS paper 2 (Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.)

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In this video, you can find detailed answers for all the above questions.

The above article has been retrieved from:

Express Web Desk . (2019, August , 15). Explained: PM Modi called for ‘One Nation, One Election’. What does this idea mean?. Indian Express. Retrieved from

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/one-nation-one-election-poll-narendra-modi-bjp-5908164/>

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What is the context about?



During his address to the nation on the 73rd Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a fresh pitch for holding Lok Sabha and assembly polls together, saying the concept of ‘one nation, one election’ is imperative to make the country great.



Last August, the Law Commission had recommended holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies to save public money.



The draft, submitted to the Law Ministry, however, cautioned that “holding simultaneous elections is not possible within the existing framework of the Constitution“.



What is meant by simultaneous elections?



It refers to holding elections to Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies simultaneously, once in a five year.



At present, elections to Lok Sabha and to all State Legislative Assemblies are not being held simultaneously.



Sometimes, elections to some State Legislative Assemblies may happen together with the elections to Lok Sabha. For example, in 2014, elections to State assemblies of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim were held along with elections to Lok Sabha.



Is an idea of simultaneous elections new to India?



The idea of simultaneous elections is not new to India. In 1951-52, the first general election to the Lok Sabha was held simultaneously with all State Assemblies. This practice of simultaneous elections continued till the general election of 1967.



This practice got disrupted due to premature dissolution of some State Legislative Assemblies in 1968. Lok Sabha itself dissolved prematurely in 1970.



As a result, the elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies are being held separately.



What purpose would simultaneous polls serve, if held?



The cost of an election has two components – one, expenditure incurred by the Election Commission and two, expenditure incurred by the political parties. A large number of government employees and public buildings are diverted from their regular responsibilities for election duties. Supporters of the simultaneous elections argue that it will reduce election expenditure in terms of finance and reduce diversion of human resources for election duties.



Model Code of Conduct (MCC) comes into operation during election season. MCC is seen as an obstacle to the government service delivery mechanism. Simultaneous elections may reduce such disruption.



Simultaneous election promotes national perspective over the regional perspective. This is important for the unity of the country.

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Since it promotes national perspective, simultaneous elections strengthen national parties. This reduces mushrooming growth of political parties based on narrow vote bank politics.



Simultaneous elections bring States on par with the Center. If the elections are to be held simultaneously once in five years, the elected state governments cannot be dismissed easily. This reduces the anomalies created by the Article 356 (President's Rule) of the Indian constitution and hence, it strengthens federalism.



The simultaneous election once in five years provides stability to the governments. It allows the government to take difficult and harsh decision in larger public interest.



What are the possible negative implications of simultaneous elections?



Simultaneous elections may reduce the expenditure incurred by the Election Commission. But there is no guarantee that expenditure of the political parties will reduce. Political parties may spend entire fund at once rather than in phases.



Center and States are equal and sovereign within their jurisdiction. Simultaneous elections may reduce the importance of state elections. Thus it affects the concept of federalism.



Article 83(2) and Article 172 of the Constitution requires that the Lok Sabha and State legislatures be in existence for five years from the date of its first meeting, “unless dissolved earlier”. Simultaneous elections ignore this phrase, as there would be no opportunity to dissolve Lok Sabha or State Assemblies.

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Elections are an important part of representative democracy. Simultaneous elections with fixed tenure of five years curtail people's right to express their confidence or displeasure on the government.



Simultaneous elections will relegate local issues or issues of state importance to the background. This completely ignores the diversity of the country.



Holding simultaneous election once in five years may also face logistical challenges. For the free and fair conduct of the elections, security forces need to be deployed in large numbers. Given the current strength of security personnel, this may be a challenging task.