

NEXT IAS

**DAILY EDITORIAL
ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**One Nation, One Poll:
Midway Solution**

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ONE NATION, ONE POLL: MIDWAY SOLUTION

Context

- **The Ram Nath Kovind panel** recently submitted its recommendations on the subject of **One Nation, One Election**.

Major recommendations

- The high-level committee, led by former President Ram Nath Kovind, has submitted a **comprehensive report on the feasibility of implementing One Nation, One Election** in India. Here are the key recommendations from the panel:

1. Restoring Simultaneous Elections:

- ♦ The committee emphasizes the **need to restore the cycle of simultaneous elections**, which was disrupted after the initial decades of India's independence.
- ♦ Holding simultaneous central and state elections could **raise GDP by as much as 1.5%** (a whopping Rs 4.5 trillion) in the year after the election.
- ♦ **Holding multiple elections every year places a significant burden** on various stakeholders, including the government, businesses, workers, courts, political parties, candidates, and civil society.

2. Two-Step Approach: The committee recommends a two-step approach to holding simultaneous elections:

- ♦ **In the first step**, elections to the House of the People (Lok Sabha) and State Legislative Assemblies should be synchronized.
- ♦ **In the second step**, elections to Municipalities and Panchayats should be synchronized with the elections to the House of the People and State Legislative Assemblies.

3. Notification by the President:

- ♦ The committee proposes that the **President of India issue a notification** on the date of the first sitting of the House of the People after a General election, designating it as the Appointed date for the synchronization of elections.

4. Tenure of State Legislative Assemblies:

- ♦ The committee recommends that the tenure of State Legislative Assemblies should **end with the subsequent General elections** to the House of the People after the Appointed date.

Issues/Challenges

- **Synchronization:** 21 out of 28 states are, in different degrees, out of the parliamentary cycle in the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha election. Their elected lives will be substantially shortened, though only once.
- **Centralisation:** The ideas of simultaneous elections signal a desire for greater centralisation and a more ordered democratic process.
- **Constitutional Amendments:** Implementing simultaneous elections would require significant constitutional amendments. Altering the election cycle and tenure of various bodies necessitates careful legal scrutiny.
 - ♦ **Balancing the federal structure while harmonizing elections** across different tiers of government is a complex task.
- **Political Opposition:** Political parties have varying stances on this issue. Some argue that simultaneous elections would strengthen democracy by reducing the constant election cycle. Others fear it might undermine regional voices and dilute state-specific issues.
 - ♦ Convincing all parties to support the change remains a challenge.
- **Logistical Challenges:** Coordinating elections across the country involves massive logistical efforts. Ensuring adequate security, managing polling booths, and conducting voter awareness campaigns simultaneously pose challenges.
 - ♦ India's diverse geography, languages, and cultural contexts add complexity.
- **Financial Implications:** Simultaneous elections would require substantial financial resources. Conducting polls at multiple levels simultaneously increases costs for the Election Commission, political parties, and candidates.

- ◆ **Funding allocation and transparency** become critical issues.
- **Erosion of Regional Autonomy:** Critics argue that simultaneous elections may erode the autonomy of State Legislative Assemblies. States with different political dynamics might lose their distinct voices.
 - ◆ **Balancing national unity with regional representation** is a delicate task.
- **Legal and Political Feasibility:** The committee's recommendations need to be legally and politically feasible. Convincing state governments, opposition parties, and civil society requires consensus-building.
 - ◆ **Addressing concerns about federalism and democratic principles** is essential.
- **Implementation Challenges:** Transitioning to simultaneous elections involves complex timelines. Aligning terms of various bodies, including local bodies, requires meticulous planning.
 - ◆ **Ensuring smooth execution** without disrupting governance is crucial.

What lies ahead?

- **Parliamentary Deliberations:** The recommendations will likely be discussed in Parliament. Lawmakers will debate the pros and cons, considering constitutional implications, federalism, and practical feasibility.
 - ◆ **The government may introduce bills** to amend relevant laws based on the committee's suggestions.
- **Political Consensus Building:** Achieving consensus among political parties is crucial. Leaders from different ideological backgrounds must find common ground.
- **Legal Challenges:** If constitutional amendments are required, legal challenges may arise. Courts may examine the validity of such changes. Balancing the spirit of federalism with national unity will be a legal tightrope.
- **State Governments' Response:** State governments play a pivotal role. Some may support simultaneous elections, while others may resist. States' autonomy and regional dynamics will influence their stance.
- **Implementation Roadmap:** Developing a detailed roadmap for implementation is essential. Timelines, synchronization, and coordination across levels of government need careful planning.
 - ◆ The Election Commission will play a central role.
- **Pilot Projects:** Pilot projects in select states or regions could test the feasibility of simultaneous elections. Learning from these experiments will inform the nationwide rollout.
- **Civil Society Engagement:** Civil society organizations, academics, and think tanks will analyze the recommendations. Debates, seminars, and research will shape public opinion.
- **Historic Shift or Stagnation:** If successful, simultaneous elections would mark a historic shift. India's electoral calendar would transform. Failure to implement could lead to status quo or alternative reforms.
- **Political Will and Leadership:** Ultimately, political will and leadership will determine the outcome. Bold decisions or cautious steps lie ahead.

Way Ahead:

- The Ram Nath Kovind Panel's recommendations on implementing One Nation, One Election have set the stage for **significant discussions and potential changes in India's electoral landscape**.
- While the idea of One Nation, One Election **has merits, addressing these challenges is vital** for successful implementation. **Public discourse and informed decision-making** will shape the future of India's electoral landscape.

Daily Mains Question Practice

How implementing One Nation, One Election process brings potential changes in India's electoral landscape. Discuss.

