



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



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## ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "ONE NATION ONE ELECTION". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "POLITY" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

### WHY IN THE NEWS?

The High-level Committee (HLC) on the concept of One Nation, One Election presented its findings to President Droupadi Murmu. The report highlighted that synchronised elections could bring about significant changes in the electoral system and governance as a whole. This committee, commonly referred to as the Kovind panel due to its chairmanship by former President Ram Nath Kovind, was established in September 2023.

### HLC'S MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

#### One Unified Election by 2029

The committee suggests amending the Constitution to hold simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha, state assemblies, and local bodies by 2029.

#### Constitutional Amendments

The committee proposes 18 amendments to the Constitution and other related statutes. The first step involves synchronising Lok Sabha and state assembly elections. This requires setting a specific date after a Lok Sabha election, upon which the terms of state assemblies with elections will end alongside Parliament's term. No state ratification is needed for these constitutional changes. The second step involves synchronising municipal and panchayat elections with Lok Sabha and state assembly elections within 100 days. This step necessitates ratification by at least half of the states.

#### Rejection of the German Model

The committee rejects the German model of a constructive vote of no-confidence. It upholds the prevailing parliamentary practice, stating that MPs' right to bring a no-confidence motion without prerequisites is integral to the Indian parliamentary system and should remain unchanged.

#### Single Electoral Roll and ID

To create a single electoral roll and ID for all tiers of government, the committee suggests amending Article 325 of the Constitution. This requires ratification by at least half of the states.

## Resolution for Hung House

In case of a hung House or no-confidence motion, fresh elections should be conducted to form the new Lok Sabha or state assembly for the remaining term.

## Introduction of Article 324A

A new Article 324A is recommended to allow Parliament to enact laws for synchronised elections to municipalities and panchayats with General Elections.

## Meeting Logistical Needs

The committee recommends that the Election Commission of India collaborate with State Election Commissions to plan ahead for logistical requirements like manpower, security, and voting machines.

## WHAT IS ONE NATION ONE ELECTION?

“One Nation One Election,” also referred to as synchronised elections or simultaneous elections, entails the process of conducting multiple elections for different tiers of government (such as national and state levels) concurrently or on a coordinated timetable. This approach involves voters casting their ballots to elect members of both the Lok Sabha and state assemblies on a single day, simultaneously (or possibly in phases, depending on the circumstances).



The concept of simultaneous elections is **not new to the country.**

01

Post adoption of the Constitution of India, the **First General Elections** to the **Lok Sabha** and all State Legislative Assemblies were held **simultaneously in 1951-52**. This practice continued in three subsequent General Elections held in **1957, 1962 and 1967**.

02

However, due to **premature dissolution of State Legislative Assemblies** in 1968 and 1969, the cycle of synchronized elections got disrupted. In 1970, the Lok Sabha itself was dissolved prematurely and fresh elections were held in 1971.

03

**Thus, since 1967 elections**, the practice of simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies could not be maintained and the elections have still **not been realigned.**

04

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF ONOE

**Enhanced Governance Efficiency:** Frequent elections can disrupt government operations as officials become preoccupied with campaigning. ONOE could minimise these disruptions, allowing for more focused attention on policy implementation and development initiatives.

**Streamlined Implementation of Policies:** The Model Code of Conduct, which restricts policy decisions during elections, can create delays and hinder progress. With fewer elections, the code's impact could be minimised, facilitating smoother policy execution.

**Curbing Political Corruption:** Simultaneous elections could potentially decrease campaign expenses, a major source of political corruption in India. Reduced fundraising pressure might lead to cleaner elections and more ethical governance.

**Cost Savings and Resource Optimization:** By consolidating resources across multiple elections, ONOE could lead to significant cost savings for the government. Sharing infrastructure, personnel, and technology for a single nationwide election cycle could be more economical than conducting numerous separate polls. Additionally, maintaining and updating voter lists would be streamlined, further reducing administrative burdens.

**Improved Voter Experience:** Consistent voter rolls across all elections would eliminate concerns about missing names or discrepancies. This would simplify the voting process and potentially increase voter turnout.

**Enhanced Security During Elections:** The extensive deployment of security forces for frequent elections can be a logistical challenge and divert resources from other critical areas. ONOE could optimise security arrangements by consolidating deployments for a single election cycle.

**Reduced Political Opportunism:** Fixed-term elections with ONOE might discourage politicians from switching parties based on short-term gains, potentially promoting greater political stability and focus on long-term objectives.

**Improved Financial Stability for States:** The pressure on state governments to announce populist measures during frequent elections can strain their finances. ONOE could mitigate this pressure, allowing for more responsible fiscal management at the state level.

## CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH ONOE IMPLEMENTATION

**Constitutional Hurdles:** The Indian Constitution mandates five-year terms for both the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, with provisions for early dissolution. ONOE raises questions about how to handle situations where a government collapses mid-term. Amending the Constitution might be necessary to accommodate ONOE, which could be a complex and time-consuming process.

**Logistical Complexities:** Managing a massive nationwide election simultaneously would require meticulous planning and significant logistical resources. Ensuring the availability and security of electronic voting machines (EVMs), personnel, and other infrastructure across the country would be a major undertaking.

**Impact on Federalism:** Critics argue that ONOE could undermine the autonomy of state governments. Simultaneous national and state elections might lead to national issues overshadowing regional concerns, potentially weakening the federal structure of India.

**Potential for Weakened Accountability:** Some argue that the current system of frequent elections keeps politicians more accountable to voters. With ONOE, voters might have to wait longer to register their dissatisfaction with a government's performance through the ballot box.

**Risk of Biased Outcomes:** Studies suggest that simultaneous elections might favour national parties disproportionately. Regional issues and parties could be overshadowed by national narratives, potentially reducing voter choice and representation at the state level.

**Uncertain Cost Implications:** While cost savings are a potential benefit, there are conflicting estimates about the true financial impact of ONOE. Initial investments in infrastructure and logistics might be necessary, and the long-term cost picture remains unclear.

**Legal Considerations:** Concerns exist about whether ONOE might violate the Constitution's principles of federalism, as highlighted in past Supreme Court rulings. Careful legal scrutiny would be required to ensure the constitutional viability of ONOE.

## PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTIONS

### Q1. Consider the following statements:

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.

**How many of the statements above are correct?**

1. Only one
2. Only two
3. All three
4. None

**Answer: D**

### Q2. Consider the following statements:

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 offence 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**

**MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION**

**Q1. Discuss the potential implications of ONOE on political corruption in India. How might simultaneous elections contribute to cleaner and more ethical governance?**

**Himanshu Mishra**

