

High Level Committee Report Summary

Simultaneous Elections in India

- The High-Level Committee (Chair: Former President Mr Ram Nath Kovind) constituted by the central government submitted its report on simultaneous elections. The committee was constituted in September 2023. Its terms of reference included examining feasibility and suggesting a framework for conducting elections of Lok Sabha, state assemblies, and local bodies at the same time. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Rationale for simultaneous election:** The Committee recommended that simultaneous election be held in the country. It observed that frequent elections create an atmosphere of uncertainty. Simultaneous election will ensure stability and predictability in governance by minimising disruption and policy paralysis. Simultaneous election will help reduce costs, and increase voter participation. It cited a research paper which observed that simultaneous elections lead to a higher economic growth, a lower inflation, increased investments, and improved quality of government expenditure.
 - **Implementation of simultaneous election:** The Committee recommended a framework for holding simultaneous election which will require constitutional amendments. At the time of the next election for Lok Sabha, all state assemblies and local bodies should be dissolved, irrespective of the remaining term as a one-time measure. This will synchronise all elections. The Committee recommended holding elections for Lok Sabha and all State Assemblies at the same time, and that of local bodies within 100 days from then.
 - Currently, a legislature is elected for the term of five years. Hence, a hung legislature at any point of time would render them out of synchronisation for the next simultaneous election. To address this, the Committee recommended that fresh election should be held for a hung legislature or a local body for a reduced term. The reduced term will be equivalent to the remaining period of the five-year cycle for the simultaneous election. This implies that if fresh election for a state assembly or Lok Sabha is held two years after the simultaneous election, its term will be only three years. This will synchronise all elections every five years.
- **Need for ratification by states:** The Committee observed that constitutional amendments in relation to terms of Parliament and state assemblies will not require ratification by states. However, constitutional amendments in relation to local bodies will be required to be passed with ratification by at least half of the states.
- **Single electoral roll:** Supervision of elections are entrusted with two constitutional authorities: (I) Election Commission of India (ECI) for both Houses of Parliament, State Legislative Assemblies and Councils, President, and Vice-President, and (ii) State Election Commission (SECs) for local bodies. Preparation of electoral roll by SECs is governed by respective state laws. Some state laws allow SECs to prepare separate electoral rolls, while others require them to utilise the electoral roll prepared by ECI.
- The Committee recommended that a single electoral roll should be adopted. This will reduce redundancy and duplication across multiple agencies. The Committee recommended empowering ECI to prepare the single electoral roll in consultation with SECs. To give effect to this single electoral roll, a constitutional amendment will be required. The Committee observed that these amendments will also require ratification by at least half of the states.
- **Logistical requirements:** The Committee recommended that ECI and SECs should carry out planning and estimation for logistical arrangements around the time of the rollout.

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