

1. Common Electoral Roll and Simultaneous Poll

Prelims Syllabus: Election & Electoral Reforms

Mains Syllabus: GS-II Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

Why in News?

- The Centre has clarified that it is not planning on amending the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to enable a common electoral roll and simultaneous elections to all Electoral Bodies in the Country.

Background:

- While the Centre may not be planning to amend the Representation of the People Act, it has held meetings with various stakeholders, including the EC, on the possibility of States adopting the same electoral roll for local body polls. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has Spoken in favour of “**One Nation, One Election** one nation, one election” many times.

What is ‘?’

- It refers to holding elections to Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, Panchayats and Urban local bodies simultaneously, once in five years.

But what are the Challenges Posed by Frequent Elections?

- Massive Expenditure.
- Policy paralysis that Results from the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct during election time.
- Impact on delivery of Essential Services.
- Burden on Crucial Manpower that is deployed during election time.
- Puts pressure on political Parties, Especially smaller ones, as elections are becoming Increasingly Expensive.

Benefits of Simultaneous Elections:

- **Governance and consistency:** The ruling parties will be able to focus on legislation and Governance rather than having to be in campaign mode forever.
- **Reduced Expenditure** of Money and Administration.
- **Continuity** in policies and programmes.
- **Efficiency of Governance:** Populist measures by governments will reduce.
- The **Impact of Black Money** on the voters will be reduced as all elections are held at a time.

Impact on Regional parties:

- There is always a tendency for voters to vote the same party in power in the state and at the Centre in case the Lok Sabha polls and the state elections are held together.
- For simultaneous elections to be implemented, Changes to be made in Constitution and Legislations:
 - ✓ Article 83 which deals with the duration of Houses of Parliament need an amendment.
 - ✓ Article 85 (on dissolution of Lok Sabha by the president).
 - ✓ Article 172 (relating to the duration of state legislatures).
- The Representation of People Act, 1951 Act would have to be amended to build in provisions for stability of tenure for both parliament and assemblies. This should include the following crucial elements:
 - ✓ Restructuring the powers and functions of the ECI to facilitate procedures required for simultaneous elections
 - ✓ A definition of simultaneous election can be added to section 2 of the 1951 act.

What is the Common Electoral Roll?

- Under the Common Electoral Roll, only one voter list will be used for Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and other elections.

How many Types of Electoral Rolls do we have in Our Country and why the Distinction?

- In many states, the voters' list for the panchayat and municipality elections is different from the one used for Parliament and Assembly elections.
- The distinction stems from the fact that the supervision and conduct of elections in our country are with two constitutional authorities – the Election Commission (EC) of India and the State Election Commissions (SECs).

Significance:

- The preparation of a separate voters list causes duplication of the effort and the Expenditure.
- Therefore, a common electoral roll and Simultaneous elections as a way to save an Enormous Amount of Effort and Expenditure.