Challenges to Simultaneous Elections

What is the issue?

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- Organising simultaneous polls for “lok sabha and state assemblies” is an ambitious task envisioned by the election commission.
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- As it is a big a legal and logistical challenge presently, the “Chief Election Commissioner” (CEC) opined that it can’t be implemented anytime soon.
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What are the challenges to organise simultaneous elections?

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- The CEC recently ruled out the possibility of holding elections to the Lok Sabha this December along with polls to the Assemblies of four States.
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- In addition to the constitutional amendment needed to extend or curtail assembly and parliamentary terms, the process also is resource intensive.
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- Simultaneous elections would need more number of “electronic voting machines” (EVMs) and voter-verifiable paper audit (VVPAT) units.
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- Moreover, ensuring the availability of VVPATs everywhere poses a logistical challenge, with dates for elections in 4 states approaching soon.
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- Further, simultaneous elections will require the use of 24 lakh EVMs, but currently the election commission has only 12 lakh EVMs.
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What are the varied opinions regarding simultaneous elections?

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- A wide political consensus, as well as legislative cooperation from various parties, is required for holding simultaneous elections.
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- It is natural that parties that control legislatures constituted in recent months or years would resist any curtailment of their tenures.
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- While those in the Opposition may prefer simultaneous polls if it means Assembly elections being advanced.
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- Significantly, BJP president Amit Shah has written to the Law Commission favouring simultaneous polls, giving a fillip to the idea.
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- The crux of the argument in favour of the concept is that the country is perpetually in election mode, resulting in lack of focus on governance.
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- The second contention is that scattered polling results in extra expenditure, which can be effectively reduced through simultaneous polls.
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- Hence, the ultimate question before India is whether altering legislative terms undermine representative democracy and federalism.
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- Considering the immense challenges, it would be far more productive for political parties to focus on basic electoral reforms to curb expenses.
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Source: The Hindu

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