Need for directly elected mayors

Why in news?

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Maharashtra cabinet has recently approved a proposal for direct election of the village *sarpanch*, the head of the gram panchayat, who was earlier elected indirectly by elected representatives.

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Why direct elections are proposed?

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- The 73rd and 74th amendments created Panchayat at Village levels and Municipalities and Municipal Corporations in towns and large cities.
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- The amendments aimed for division of powers and functions.
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- It called for a 3 tier system.
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- All the members of these three level are elected.
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- Further, the chairperson of panchayats at the intermediate and district levels are indirectly elected from amongst the elected members.
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- However the resources and the powers continue to be vested with the state governments, which are reluctant to delegate them to LSGs.
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- So the proposals are made for direct elections of LSG authorities to bring into materialize the vision of the institution.
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What are the problems with the office of mayor?

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- Head of the municipal corporation, the mayor, functions merely as a ceremonial authority.
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- Executive decisions are largely carried out by the municipal commissioner appointed by the state government.
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- Short tenure of mayors in many states which is hardly enough to create lasting changes in a large metropolis.
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- Sometimes, directly elected mayors run into corporations dominated by members of rival political parties creating difficulty in day to day governance.
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What should be done?

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- A private member bill suggested a provision for a mayor-in-council that would be nominated by the directly elected mayor.
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- Such a council, with an executive role, has existed in Kolkata and has performed reasonably well.
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- Direct elections for Mayor will go a long way in accomplishing the goals of democratic decentralisation.
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Source: Livemint

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