Re-election on Maximum NOTA Votes - Maharashtra

Why in news?

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Maharashtra State Election Commission (MSEC) recently ruled if NOTA gets the maximum votes in an election, re-elections will be held.

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What is the decision?

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- The MSEC supervises elections to panchayats and municipalities in the state.
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- For local body polls in Maharashtra, the NOTA will now be treated as a “fictional electoral candidate”.
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- None of the contesting candidates will be declared as elected and fresh elections would be held, if NOTA gets maximum votes.
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- The order will be applicable to polls and bypolls to all municipal corporations, municipal councils and nagar panchayats.
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- It comes five years after the Supreme Court ordered the Election Commission to introduce a ‘None of the Above’ (NOTA) button on all electronic voting machines (EVMs).
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- But earlier, irrespective of the NOTA votes, the contesting candidate with the highest number of votes was declared a winner.
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- This was the case even if NOTA has polled more votes than the candidate with the highest votes.
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Why is it significant?

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- This is perhaps the first time that the option was being introduced anywhere in the country.
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- The SC had wished that the introduction of NOTA will -
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i. improve the electoral process through increased voter participation
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ii. compulsion on political parties to field good candidates
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iii. reflection of negative votes in an election result
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- Giving effect to all these, the MSEC's decision would now honour and respect the majority will and opinion of the people.
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- The MSEC's move also speaks for the true spirit of decentralization of power down to the third tier.
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What are the other initiatives of MSEC?

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- The SEC of Maharashtra has brought in some key electoral reforms in the last few years.
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- It is the first one to go fully digital in the filing of nomination papers and affidavits of all candidates.
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- This has eliminated most errors and enabled instant dissemination of information to the voters.
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- It is the first SEC in the country to cancel registration of more than 250 political parties for failure to submit audited accounts in time.
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- It is also the first one to disqualify an elected representative for failure to comply with expense disclosure rules.
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Source: Indian Express, Livemint

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