Simultaneous Election

Why in news?

The Centre has decided to form a committee to examine the issue of conducting the simultaneous elections.

What is Simultaneous election?

- The "One Nation, One Election" idea envisages a system where elections to all state assemblies and the Lok Sabha will have to be held simultaneously.
- This will involve the **restructuring of the Indian election cycle** in a manner that elections to the states and the centre synchronise.
- This would mean that the voters will cast their **vote** for electing members of the LS and the state assemblies **on a single day**, at the same time or in a **phased manner** as the case may be.

What is the current scenario?

- Currently, elections to the state assemblies and the Lok Sabha are held separately that is whenever the incumbent government's five-year term ends or whenever it is dissolved due to various reasons.
- This applies to both the state legislatures and the Lok Sabha.
- The terms of Legislative Assemblies and the Lok Sabha may not synchronise with one another.

What is the history behind?

- Simultaneous elections were the norm until 1967.
- But following dissolution of some Legislative Assemblies in 1968 and 1969 and that of the Lok Sabha in December 1970, elections to State Assemblies and Parliament have been held separately.
- The idea of reverting to simultaneous polls was mooted in the annual report of the **Election Commission in 1983** and also in the report of **Law Commission** in the year **1999**.
- The recent push came ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha polls in the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) manifesto.
- NITI Aayog prepared a working paper on the subject in January 2017.
- In the Law Commission's working paper that was brought out in April 2018, it said that at least "five Constitutional recommendations" would be required

to get this off the ground.

What are the pros?

- It will reduce enormous **costs** involved in separate elections.
- It will reduce the burden on the **manpower** deployed.
- The system will help ruling parties **focus on governance**, instead of being constantly in election mode.
- It reduces the distractions from long-term planning and policy goals.
- It will boost **voter turnout**, according to the Law Commission.

What are the cons?

- Holding simultaneous elections is likely to affect the judgment of voters as the national and state issues are different.
- It will **reduce the accountability** of the government to the people as the elections will be held once in five years.
- But repeated elections keep legislators on their toes and increases accountability.
- It may **curtail or extend the tenure** of State legislatures to bring their elections in line with the Lok Sabha poll dates.
- There is a serious question of what happens if the government at the Centre falls.
- There will be a blow to democracy and federalism when **President's rule** will have to be imposed in the interim period in a state. This may be due to the postponement of election in a State until the synchronised phase arrives.
- It will, in all probability, benefit the dominant national party or the incumbent at the Centre while **disadvantaging the smaller regional party** and issue.
- In a parliamentary democracy, the legitimacy of executive is responsible to the legislature would be undermined by taking away the legislature's power to bring down a minority regime by mandating a fixed tenure.

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express.

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