Zealous Push for Simultaneous Elections

What is the issue?

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- The proposal for holding simultaneous elections to the centre and the states has gained traction in recent times.
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- But there are many practical difficulties and democratic challenges that needs recognized before proceeding forward.
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What are the political developments regarding simultaneous elections?

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- **Advantages -** Simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies is said to have the benefits of saving poll expenditure considerably.
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- It would also help the ruling parties to focus on governance instead of being put constantly in electioneering mode.
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- **The Developments -** The BJP led government at the Centre has been talking about the need for simultaneous elections for some time now.
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- The Union Law Commission has sought the opinion of the public, political parties, academicians and other stakeholders on the proposal.
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- The Commission has also released a document outlining the amendments that may be required in the Constitution and electoral laws for achieving the same.
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- While the final draft will be put out after the views of the public are incorporated, the present outline itself holds very significant provisions.
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- **Envisioned Provisions -** Among the possible recommendations mentioned in the outline, there is a proposal for “constructive vote of no-confidence”.
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- I.e. while expressing lack of confidence in one government, members of the legislature will have to repose trust in an alternative.
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- Towards this end, even a temporary waiver of anti-defection law is being considered to help in forming a stable alternative government.
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- However, critics hold that such provisions for stabilising governments could be considered even now without simultaneous elections.
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- **Political Motivation -** Obverses believe that voters would tend to prefer the same party at the centre and the state if elections are held simultaneously.
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- In this backdrop, it is to be noted that PM Modi has clearly emerged as the primary pole at the centre with no potent alternative in sight.
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- Hence, sceptics believe that BJP’s zeal for simultaneous elections is driven by this situational advantage – which it seeks to capitalise on across states.
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How can the electoral cycles be synchronised?

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- The primary challenge is regarding the termination of existing legislatures to align it with the parliamentary election cycle.
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- This would be difficult to execute as palpable political repercussions are bound to crop up on the timing and modalities of dissolution.
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- Additionally, this would undermine the federal polity and representative democracy that India has cherished since independence.
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- The Law Commission has suggested an alternative to this by indicating its openness to embrace 2 distinct electoral cycles into which states are clubbed.
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- I.e. to align elections for one set of states elections with the central and the

rest will face elections 30 months later (mid-way through Lok Shaba’s term).
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- The decision on which states are to be clubbed together is to be decided based on the proximity of the state legislature’s current tenure with that of the parliamentary elections.
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- Overall, there are multiple difficulties involved in the process and detailed debates and deliberations are needed before proceeding further.
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Source: The Hindu

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