

Simultaneous poll

Article 368 governs the process of amending the Constitution. Constitutional amendments can take place through three different procedures.

The first is through a simple majority of those present and voting in each House of Parliament.

That is, some provisions in the Constitution can be amended in the same way ordinary legislations are passed; it does not require a specific quorum. Such provisions are excluded from the purview of Article 368, thereby creating a separate category.

Some examples include amendments contemplated in Article 4 (changes related to the organisation of States), Article 169 (abolition or creation of Legislative Councils in States), and para 21(2)13 of Schedule VI (provisions for the administration of Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram),

among others.

For amending provisions not within the first category, Article 368 stipulates that they can be effected by a prescribed ‘special majority,’ wherein not less than two thirds of the members are present and voting in each House of Parliament as well as by a majority of the total membership of each House.

A third category requires both a ‘special majority’ and ratification by at least one half of the State legislatures.

No specific time limit for ratification by the State legislatures has been specified but resolutions ratifying the proposed amendment should be passed before the Bill is presented to the President for his assent.

Which amendments require ratification by States?

The constitutional provisions that require ratification in order to be amended are specifically listed in the proviso to Article 368(2) and pertain to the federal structure of the

Constitution.

They are commonly referred to as ‘entrenched provisions’ and are as follows if there is a change in the provisions regarding elections to the post of the President of India (Article 54 and 55); if there is a change in the extent of the executive power of the Union or the State governments (Article 73 and 162);

If there is any change in the provisions regarding the Union judiciary or the High Courts. (Articles 124–147 and 214–231); if the distribution of legislative and administrative powers between the Union and the States is affected (Article 245 to 255); if any of the Lists in the Seventh Schedule is affected; if the representation of the States in Parliament is changed (Article 82); and if Article 368 itself is amended.

For instance, the Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016, which introduced the Goods and Services Tax regime was ratified

by more than half of the State legislatures before receiving the President’s assent on September 8, 2016

What were the debates regarding ‘entrenched provisions’?

The Constituent Assembly debates show that Dr. B.R Ambedkar was in favour of the ratification by States for the amendment of certain constitutional provisions to ensure that the federal structure of the Constitution remains fundamentally unaltered. “

Dr. Ambedkar cautioned that permitting all constitutional amendments to take place by a simple majority would defeat the principle of separation of powers among the three organs of the State.

Can a constitutional amendment be struck down if not ratified?

In *Kihoto Hollohan versus Zachillhu* (1992) popularly known as the AntiDefection case, the constitutional validity of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution inserted

by the Constitution (Fifty Second Amendment) Act, 1985 was challenged on the grounds that the amendment was not ratified by the States.

Though the Tenth Schedule was to deal with defection, it also purported to oust the jurisdiction of all courts by virtue of Paragraph 7.

The amendment brought about changes with respect to the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the High Courts, one of the provisions that require ratification by half of the States.

A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court upheld the validity of the Tenth Schedule but declared Paragraph 7 of the Schedule invalid for want of ratification.

On July 20, 2021, the Supreme Court in Union of India versus Rajendra N. Shah struck down provisions of the Constitution (97th Amendment) Act, 2011 to the extent that it introduced Part IX B in the Constitution to deal with

co-operative societies.

The Court unanimously held that the amendment required ratification by at least one half of the State legislatures as per Article 368(2) of the Constitution, since it dealt with an exclusive State subject per Entry 32 in List II of the Seventh Schedule.

Can a State rescind its ratification?

There is no definite answer.

There is no specific mention of it in the Constitution nor have courts in India dealt with this before.

Moreover, since the prevailing constitutional practice makes ratification by at least half of all the States sufficient for compliance without requiring all States to consent, such a situation is unlikely to arise.

What has the Law Commission said?

In August 2018, the Law Commission of India, chaired by

Justice B. S. Chauhan, released a draft report stipulating that simultaneous elections are not feasible within the existing framework of the Constitution.

It suggested that appropriate amendments have to be brought about in the Constitution, the Representation of the People's Act 1951, and the Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies before such a poll is conducted.

Notably, the Commission highlighted that a constitutional amendment to this effect must receive ratification from at least 50% of the States.

However, experts have cautioned that bringing about such amendments as recommended by the Law Commission is not possible without infringing upon the federal structure of the Constitution.

According to P.D.T Achary, former Secretary General of Lok Sabha, in order for simultaneous polls to take place all existing State Assemblies

have to be dissolved, which currently have different tenures.

This can be done in two ways either the ruling government in the State recommends this voluntarily and the Governor gives assent, or there is a breakdown of constitutional machinery and the President gets involved through a recommendation of the Central government.

Environmental humanities

The Environmental Humanities is a multidisciplinary field where we study the History, Literature, Philosophy, and Anthropology of environmental problems, such as climate change.

The environmental humanities (also ecological humanities) is an interdisciplinary area of research, drawing on the many environmental sub-disciplines that have emerged in the humanities over the past several decades, in particular environmental literature, environmental philosophy,

environmental history, science and technology studies, environmental anthropology, and environmental communication.

Environmental humanities employs humanistic questions about meaning, culture, values, ethics, and responsibilities to address pressing environmental problems

The Hard Sciences

Sciences that explore the workings of the natural world are usually called hard sciences, or natural sciences. They include:

- Physics
- Chemistry
- Biology

The Soft Sciences

In general, the soft sciences deal with intangibles and relate to the study of human and animal behaviours, interactions, thoughts, and feelings.

- Psychology
- Sociology

Science awards

The Union government is set to institute the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 56 prizes to felicitate scientists, technologists and innovators.

Akin to the prestigious Padma awards, these awards will not include any cash component; instead, they will likely bestow a certificate and a medallion on the awardee,

These prizes will be awarded annually for physics, chemistry, biological sciences, mathematics and computer science, earth science, medicine, engineering science, agricultural science, environmental science, technology and innovation, atomic energy, space science and technology, and a 13th category, simply called “others”

Green nudge

What are green nudges?

Green nudges are gentle persuasions to influence environment friendly behaviour in people.

In behavioural economics, nudges are interventions that influence people's choices to make certain decisions without restricting the choices available to them.

The purpose of green nudges

The green nudges were a result of Chinese regulations that prohibited online food delivery platforms from including SUCs (single use cutlery)(SUC) tin orders unless explicitly requested.



Mapping



WHO report

Approximately four of every five people with hypertension are not adequately treated, but if countries can scale up coverage, 76 million deaths could be averted between 2023 and 2050, the World Health Organization (WHO) said in its first ever report on the global impact of high blood pressure on Tuesday.

Hypertension is the most important risk factor for death and disability in

India, according to a paper in *The Lancet*, regional health (Southeast Asia), published late last year.

It adds that less than one fourth of hypertensive patients in India had their blood pressure under control during 2016-2020.

Though this rate has improved from the previous years' figures, substantial differences exist across regions.

The WHO report states that hypertension affects one in three adults worldwide.

The number of people living with hypertension (blood pressure of 140/90 mmHg or higher or taking medication for hypertension) doubled between 1990 and 2019, from 650 million to 1.3 billion.

G20

TroikaPlus" combine of Indonesia India Brazil South Africa (the first such series of developing countries

to be hosts/future hosts of the G20), which proposed the winning formulation on Ukraine.

In geographical terms, the Third Pole refers to the HinduKush Himalayan Region, or upper South Asia, as it has the largest volume of ice and snow outside of the North and South Poles.

In development economics, however, it is clear that the Global South is now seen as the third pole, and many global powers are coming to terms with its worth.

While the Global South, made up of more than 125 countries, may not compare in wealth with the 'North', it is increasingly becoming a voice to be heard, a voice which resets the priorities at the global forum on issues such as development, climate change, health and the digital divide.

India's championing of the Global South, and within it the membership of the 55nation African Union (AU), was another reason for the desired outcomes at the G20.

Current Affairs 20th september 2023 by Saurabh Pandey

What is to be noted is the particular role of regional organisations in multilateral fora after the EU and AU; it will be the turn of ASEAN and the Community of Latin American & Caribbean States (CELAC) to seek G20 membership.
