

Current Affairs 1st December 2023 by Saurabh Pandey

Simultaneous election

- The first four general elections involved simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.
- After the NITI Aayog backed the proposal in 2017, it was mentioned next year in then President Ram Nath Kovind's address to the joint session of Parliament.
- He asked parties to have a 'sustained debate on the subject of holding simultaneous elections'.
- The Law Commission also released a draft report on August 30, 2018, examining the legal constitutional aspects related to the proposal
- Second, the dense electoral cycle involves prolonged deployment of security and police forces on election duty, thus posing a concern for national security and maintenance of law and order.
- The administration comes under strain due to the mass scale transfers of officials within the State, either by the government looking for pliable officers in key positions or by the order of the ECI once code of conduct comes into force.
- Third, holding separate elections comes in the way of development as the enforcement of the code of conduct for a longer period leads to the stoppage of ongoing development work.
- First, holding separate elections incurs massive recurring expenditure for the State and the Central government.
- No new projects can be started during this period and even ongoing projects suffer from inertia
- In case of simultaneous elections, there would only be one electoral roll for all elections and the government would need the services of security forces and civilian officials only once.
- Fourth, simultaneous elections would lessen the role of money in elections as campaign finance of parties' would come down.
- The monitoring of election expenditure by the ECI will also become more effective due to a

Current Affairs 1st December 2023 by Saurabh Pandey

concerted effort at the national level.

- Fifth, given the increasing role of divisive politics for electoral gains, the 'one nation one election' plan would help in reducing the pernicious role of regionalism, casteism, and communalism in mobilizing electorates. It would help in bringing issues of national importance on the electoral agenda.
- And finally, it is being argued that having too many elections creates a sense of fatigue among electorates. Voter turnout at the national level has stagnated in recent elections
- **Why not simultaneous election?**
- First, the Centre's initiative is being viewed as being antithetical to the federal spirit as there has not been wider consultation with constituent States, especially the ones that are being ruled by non-BJP parties.
- Second, holding simultaneous elections would most likely push local and regional issues to the periphery.
- There would be a 'national constituency phenomenon' favouring politywide parties due to

their comparative advantage in terms of their claim to better serve 'national interest/ national security/national unity' rather than regional parties who will be sidelined for focusing on 'narrow, parochial' issues.

- Simultaneous elections in a federal polity, would incentivise regional discontent.
- Third, as far as cost saving is concerned, holding simultaneous elections would require large scale purchase of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail Machines (VVPAT).
- Moreover, biennial elections to Legislative councils/Rajya Sabha and by elections would still be held, costing money and resources.

- Fourth, frequent elections rather than sapping the enthusiasm of voters keep them enthused, as evident in the comparatively higher percentage of voting in State and local elections.

The Hindu

Legal and constitutional issues

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First, at least five Articles in the Constitution shall need amendment.

- These articles are Articles 83(2) and 85(2) that relate respectively to the duration and dissolution of the Lok Sabha.
- Also, on the legislative agenda would be Articles 172(1) and 174(2), which provide for the duration and dissolution of the State Assemblies.
- Article 85 (1) and 174 (2) allows the President and the Governor to dissolve the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha before the completion of their tenure of five years, under the circumstances mentioned in the Constitution.
- Article 83(2) allows the tenure of the Lok Sabha to be extended for one year at a time in case of an Emergency being proclaimed under Article 352. Article 172(1) makes a similar provision for State assemblies.
- These provisions would need to be repealed.
- As of now, after the passage of the anti-defection law enshrined in the 10th Schedule (52nd Amendment Act, 1985) and later the Supreme Court judgment in S.R. Bommai case

(1994) followed by the High Court judgment in Rameswar Prasad (2006), the decision to dissolve the Vidhan Sabha and impose President Rule under Article 356 is subject to judicial review.

- The Court can revive the Assembly and restore the government if it does not find the grounds of the President's rule to be constitutionally valid as has happened in recent years in the case of Nagaland, Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh.
- Moreover, such amendments need not only the two third majority support of both Houses of Parliament but also ratification by at least half of the State Legislatures under Article 368
- It would also be much more complex and difficult to link general elections with local bodies elections.
- This is because local government is a State subject (seventh schedule, List II) and all the State Legislatures have passed separate Panchayati Raj Acts and Municipal Acts, fixing the tenure of these bodies (five years) as per Article 243(E) and 243 (U) respectively.

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- Since all 28 States have their own specific Acts, it would require changes in 56 sets of legal provisions.

The Hindu

Defence news

- The approval, **termed Acceptance of Necessity (AoN)**, is the first step toward procurement of any military equipment and hardware under India's defence acquisition norm. The tendering and contracting process is undertaken only after the grant of AoN.

- **Antiship missiles (MRAShM) for the Navy.** The MRAShM is a lightweight surface to surface missile which will be a primary offensive weapon aboard various Indian naval ships

- The **Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM)** is a supersonic missile that can be launched vertically with a rapid response time and is intended to intercept various airborne threats such as guided bombs, aircraft, missiles, and helicopters.

- The first three of a series of eight antisubmarine warfare shallow water crafts being built by Cochin

Shipyard Ltd. for the Navy were launched on the shipyard premises on Thursday.

- The ships, to be named INS Mahe, INS Malvan and INS Mangrol upon commissioning, were launched.

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Current Affairs 1st December 2023 by Saurabh Pandey

bombs, aircraft, missiles, and helicopters.

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Loss and Damage fund

- On the first day of the 28th Conference of Parties or COP28 here on Thursday, member countries agreed to make operational a Loss and Damage (L&D) Fund meant to compensate countries already dealing with climate change.
- To be based at the World Bank but managed by an independent secretariat, the Fund has received commitments worth nearly \$250 million from countries, though billions of dollars are still needed to meet its purpose.

- The Fund was first announced at the conclusion of COP27 in Sharm ElSheikh, Egypt,
- The World Bank will be the “interim host” of the Fund for a period of four years. All developing countries are eligible to apply for and every country has been “invited” to contribute to the Fund.

The Hindu

MILAN EXERCISE

About MILAN

- MILAN is a biennial multilateral naval exercise incepted by Indian Navy in 1995 at Andaman and Nicobar Command.
- Since its inception, the event has been held biennially except for 2001, 2005, 2016 and 2020. While the 2001 and 2016 editions were not held due to International Fleet Reviews, the 2005 editions was rescheduled to 2006 due to the 2004 Tsunami. 2020 edition of MILAN was postponed to 2022 due to COVID-19.
- Starting with the participation of only four countries, viz Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand, in

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the 1995 edition, the exercise has since transitioned leaps and bounds in terms of number of participants and complexity of exercises.

- Originally conceived in consonance with India's 'Look East Policy', MILAN expanded in ensuing years with the GOI's 'Act East policy' and Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative, to include participation from island nations in the Western IOR as also IOR littorals.
- Participation increased from six regional countries to 18 countries in 2014 which included IOR littorals.
- With Indian Navy's engagement with Friendly Foreign Countries (FFCs) expanding over the decades, a need was felt to further consolidate the naval cooperation by enhancing the scale and complexity of the MILAN exercise and engaging both regional and extra regional navies of the world.
- Considering the infrastructure requirements of a large naval gathering, it was decided to shift the event to mainland, and Visakhapatnam, being the Headquarters of Eastern Naval

Command, was nominated to host the event.

- India is also gearing up to host its largest multilateral exercise early next year.
- The next edition of "Exercise Milan" is scheduled for February 2024

Maritime outreach

- India has also significantly expanded assistance in capacity building to countries in the region.
- This includes giving platforms, regular training as well as routinely deploying Mobile Training Teams (MTT) overseas to facilitate capacity development.
- "Recently, MTT from Indian Naval Work up teams undertook operational sea checks of ships of two friendly countries Sri Lanka and South Africa at Trincomalee and Cape Town respectively where they worked alongside the ship's crew to achieve very high standards of operational readiness as well as safety compliance,"

The Hindu

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XPoSat

- The Indian Space Research Organisation has announced a plan to launch its first Xray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat) to investigate the polarisation of intense Xray sources.
- The ISRO said that while space based Xray astronomy had been established in India focusing on imaging, time domain studies, and spectroscopy, the XPoSat mission marked a major value addition.
- This research, supplementing traditional time and frequency domain studies, introduced a novel dimension to Xray astronomy, generating anticipation and excitement within the scientific community.
- The satellite will be launched by the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle
- The XPoSat is designed for observation from a low earth orbit (non sun-synchronous orbit of 650km altitude, low inclination of approximately six degrees) and will carry two scientific payloads.
- With these two payloads, the mission is capable of simultaneous studies of temporal, spectral, and polarisation features of the bright Xray sources.
- The mission objectives include the measurement of Xray polarisation in the energy band of 830 keV emanating from Xray sources and longterm spectral and temporal studies of cosmic Xray sources in the energy band of 0.815 keV.
- The mission life is expected to be approximately five years.
- The primary payload, POLIX (Polarimeter Instrument in Xrays), is designed to measure polarimetry parameters, specifically the degree and angle of polarisation, in the medium Xray energy range of 830 keV photons originating from astronomical sources.
- The secondary payload is the XSPECT (Xray Spectroscopy and Timing) payload, which will provide spectroscopic information within the energy range of 0.815 keV.
- The Hindu

Antiretroviral THERAPY

- We have effective antiretroviral medications available to prevent

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multiplication of HIV. People with HIV who are on these antiretroviral medications can lead a normal, healthy lifestyle without developing opportunistic infections.

- Results from clinical trials recommend starting Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) soon after diagnosis.
- Over 90% of anti retrovirals consumed globally were from India effective biomedical prevention tools in preexposure prophylaxis (PrEP) medications.
- These oral medications are very effective in preventing HIV acquisition if a person with high risk of HIV takes them correctly without fail.
- A long acting injectable PrEP medication called Cabotegravir has been developed.
- Cabotrgravir injections can be taken every 2 months instead of the daily oral pill and studies have shown higher efficacy in HIV prevention with long acting injectable PrEP.
- The Hindu

Anti Retrovirus

Interesting Points about Retroviruses

- Retroviruses contain RNA as genetic material but have DNA-dependent steps in their replication.
- Replicates via reverse transcription because of the presence of reverse transcriptase enzyme.
- Integrase transfers the viral DNA into the cell nucleus and viral dsDNA is covalently and randomly integrated into the cell's genome.
- Retroviruses that can transform host cells at high rates contain gene sequences such as viral oncogenes and proto-oncogenes.
- Human retroviruses can cause immune deficiencies, cancer, and neurological diseases.

Report on air pollution

- Outdoor air pollution from all sources accounts for 2.18 million deaths per year in India, second only to China, according to a modelling study published in The BMJ.
- The research found that air pollution from using fossil fuels in industry, power generation, and transportation accounts for 5.1 million extra deaths a year worldwide.
- This equates to 61 per cent of a total estimated 8.3 million deaths worldwide due to ambient (outdoor) air pollution from all sources in 2019, which could be avoided by replacing fossil fuels with clean, renewable energy.

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Broadcast regulation

Act, 2000 and regulations made there under.

Broadcast regulation bill

- Consolidated Legal Framework for the entire Broadcasting sector
- Content Evaluation Committees for adherence to Programme Code and Advertisement Code
- Broadcast Advisory Council to replace existing Inter Departmental Committee
- Penalty structure linked to financial capacity
- Accessibility measures for persons with disabilities

- 2. Contemporary Definitions and Future-Ready Provisions: To keep pace with the evolving technologies and services, the bill introduces comprehensive definitions for contemporary broadcasting terms and incorporates provisions for emerging broadcasting technologies.
- 3. Strengthens the Self-Regulation Regime: It enhances self-regulation with the introduction of 'Content evaluation committees' and evolves the existing Inter-Departmental Committee into a more participative and broader 'Broadcast Advisory Council'.

Key Highlights:

- 1. Consolidation and Modernization: It addresses a long standing need of consolidating and updating the regulatory provisions for various broadcasting services under a single legislative framework. This move streamlines the regulatory process, making it more efficient and contemporary. It extends its regulatory purview to encompass broadcasting over-the-top (OTT) content and digital news and current affairs currently regulated through IT
- 4. Differentiated Programme Code and Advertisement Code: It allows for a differentiated approach to Programme and Advertisement Codes across various services and require self-classification by broadcasters and robust access control measures for restricted content.
- 5. Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities: The bill addresses the specific needs of persons with

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disabilities by providing for enabling provisions for issue of comprehensive accessibility guidelines.

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- 6. **Statutory Penalties and Fines:** The draft Bill introduces statutory penalties such as: advisory, warning, censure, or monetary penalties, for operators and broadcasters. Provision for imprisonment and/or fines remains, but only for very serious offenses, ensuring a balanced approach to regulation.

- 7. **Equitable Penalties:** Monetary penalties and fines are linked to the financial capacity of the entity, taking into account their investment and turnover to ensure fairness and equity.

- 8. **Infrastructure Sharing, Platform Services and Right of Way:** The bill also includes provisions for infrastructure sharing among broadcasting network operators and carriage of platform services. Further, it streamlines the Right of Way section to address relocation and alterations more efficiently, and establishes a structured dispute resolution mechanism.

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