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Table 4.1 Consultations/Responses from various categories of stakeholders

S. No.	Stakeholders Category	Number
1.	Citizens(Website/E-mail/Post)	21,558
2.	Former Chief Justices of India	4
3.	Former Supreme Court Judge	1
4.	Former Chief Justices of High Courts	12
5.	Former Chief Election Commissioners	4
6.	State Election Commissioners	8
7.	Bar Council of India	1
8.	Business Organisations	3
9.	Political Parties	47
10.	Economists	14
11.	Law Commission of India	2

VI. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

The Committee conducted extensive research and analysed all the intricate legal, economic and political issues connected with Simultaneous Elections. It also examined international best practices for their possible adoption. The Committee studied the system of Simultaneous Elections in countries like South Africa, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, Indonesia and Philippines. The Committee held that considering the uniqueness of its polity, it would be best to develop an appropriate model for India.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE

- i. The Committee recommends amendments to the Constitution to enable Simultaneous Elections in two steps:
 - As the first step, Simultaneous Elections will be held for the House of the People and the State Legislative Assemblies. For this, no ratification by the States will be required for the Constitutional Amendment.
 - In the second step, elections to the Municipalities and the Panchayats will be synchronised with the House of the People and the State Legislative Assemblies in such a way that Municipalities and Panchayats elections are held within hundred days of holding elections to the House of the People and the State Legislative Assemblies. This will require ratification by not less than one-half of the States.

- ii. For the purpose of preparation of single electoral roll and electoral photo identity cards (EPIC) for use in elections to all the three tiers of Government, amendments in the Constitution of India are recommended to enable Election Commission of India to prepare a single electoral roll and EPIC in consultation with the State Election Commissions. These amendments will require ratification by not less than one-half of the States.
- iii. In the event of a hung House, no-confidence motion, or any such event, fresh elections should be held to constitute the new House of the People or State Legislative Assembly for the “unexpired term” of the House of the People.
- iv. The Committee recommends that for meeting logistical requirements, the Election Commission of India will plan and estimate in advance in consultation with the State Election Commissions, and take steps for the deployment of polling personnel, security forces, EVMs/VVPATs, etc., so that free and fair Simultaneous Elections are held in all the three tiers of the Government.

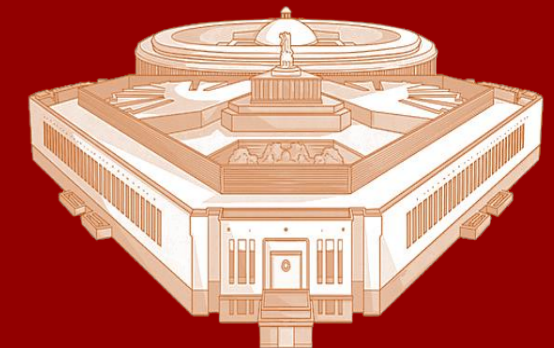
We can do no better than to recall what Swami Vivekananda had said

“Society is an organism which obeys the immutable law of progress; and change, judicious and cautious change, is necessary for the well-being, and indeed the preservation of the social system.”

---Swami Vivekananda
on the Sea-Voyage Movement,
The Bengalee, May 18, 1895



HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE(HLC)



SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS

REPORT AT A GLANCE

2024



Shri Ram Nath Kovind,
Former President of India



Chairman

Shri Amit Shah,
Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Cooperation, Government of India



Member

Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad,
Former Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha



Member

Shri N.K. Singh,
Former Chairman, 15th Finance Commission



Member

Dr. Subhash C. Kashyap,
Former Secretary General, Lok Sabha



Member

Shri Harish Salve,
Senior Advocate



Member

Shri Sanjay Kothari,
Former Chief Vigilance Commissioner



Member

Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal,
Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ministry of Law and Justice



Special Invitee

Dr. Niten Chandra,
Secretary, Government of India



Secretary, HLC

I. SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS BACKGROUND

Simultaneous Elections (popularly known as One Nation, One Election) means holding elections to the House of the People, all the State Legislative Assemblies, and local bodies i.e., Municipalities and Panchayats, together. Conscious efforts were made by the Central Government, the State Governments and Political Parties on persuasion of the Election Commission of India to prematurely dissolve State Legislative Assemblies in seven states of Bihar, Bombay, Madras, Mysore, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, so that Simultaneous Elections could be held in 1957 (Refer Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Dissolution of State Legislative Assemblies in 1957

Name of the Legislative Assembly	Date of normal expiry of term	Date on which dissolved
Bihar	12-05-1957	02-04-1957
Bombay	03-05-1957	04-04-1957
Madras	03-05-1957	31-03-1957
Mysore	18-06-1957	01-04-1957
Punjab	03-05-1957	31-03-1957
Uttar Pradesh	19-05-1957	13-03-1957
West Bengal	18-06-1957	05-04-1957

Source: Report on General Election in India, 1957 (Election Commission of India)

Simultaneous Elections were, by and large, in vogue till the fourth general elections of 1967. With the disruption of the cycle of Simultaneous Elections, thereafter, the country now faces five to six elections in a year. If Municipalities and Panchayat elections are also included, the number of elections will increase manifold.

II. NEED FOR SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS

Over the years, the issue of restoration of Simultaneous Elections has been drawing the

attention of political parties and their leaders, policymakers, academicians, industry leaders, businesses, citizens and others, for the reasons elucidated below:

- i. Frequent elections burden the government exchequer with **additional expenditure**. If the expenditure incurred by political parties is also added, these figures will be even higher.
- ii. Asynchronous elections cause **uncertainty and instability**, thwarting supply chains, business investments, economic growth, quality of public expenditure, educational and other outcomes besides upsetting the social harmony.
- iii. **Disruption of government machinery** due to asynchronous elections causes hardship to citizens.
- iv. Frequent use of government officials and security forces **adversely affect discharge of their duties**.
- v. Frequent imposition of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) causes **policy paralysis** and slows down the pace of the developmental programmes.
- vi. Staggered elections induce **'voters' fatigue'** and present a significant challenge in ensuring their participation.

III. ADVANTAGES OF SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS

- i. Simultaneous Elections ensure ease and convenience to voters, avoids voters' fatigue and facilitate **greater voter turnout**.
- ii. Synchronising elections would result in **higher economic growth and stability** as it would enable businesses to take decisions without fear of adverse policy changes.
- iii. Conducting elections to all three tiers of the Government together would **avoid disruption of supply chains and production cycles** due to migrant workers seeking leave of absence to cast their vote.
- iv. Simultaneous Elections **enhance focus on governance and prevent policy paralysis**.
- v. Frequent elections create an atmosphere of uncertainty and impact policy decisions. Holding Simultaneous Elections would bring **enhanced certainty in policy making**.

- vi. Simultaneous Elections would **reduce financial burden** on the government exchequer by avoiding duplication of expenditure on intermittent elections.
- vii. Adoption of Simultaneous Elections would result in **optimised use of scarce resources** and result in increased capital investment and asset creation.
- viii. Synchronising electoral calendars would ensure availability of more time for governance and **unhindered delivery of public services to citizens**.
- ix. Simultaneous Elections would reduce the number of election related offences and disputes and **reduce burden on courts**.
- x. Simultaneous Elections would result in **avoidance of duplication of efforts** and saving of time and energy of government officials, political workers and security forces.
- xi. Holding of elections once every five years would result in **mitigation of social disharmony and conflict**, which is often observed during elections.

IV. CONSTITUTION OF HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE

In order to examine and recommend modalities of Simultaneous Elections in the House of the People, State Legislative Assemblies, Municipalities and Panchayats, the Government of India constituted a High Level Committee vide Gazette Notification dated 2nd September 2023.

The Terms of Reference of the High Level Committee are given below-

- (a) Examine and make recommendation for holding Simultaneous Elections to the House of the People (Lok Sabha), State Legislative Assemblies, Municipalities and Panchayats, keeping in view the existing framework under the Constitution of India and other statutory provisions, and for that purpose, examine and recommend specific amendments to the Constitution, the Representation of the People Act, 1950, the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and the rules made thereunder and any other law or rules which would require amendments for the purpose of holding Simultaneous Elections.
- (b) Examine and recommend, if the amendments to the Constitution would require ratification by the States.

- (c) Analyse and recommend possible solution in a scenario of Simultaneous Elections emerging out of hung House, adoption of no-confidence motion, or defection or any such other event.
- (d) Suggest a framework for synchronisation of elections and specifically, suggest the phases and time frame within which Simultaneous Elections may be held if they cannot be held in one go and also suggest any amendments to the Constitution and other laws in this regard and propose such rules that may be required in such circumstances.
- (e) Recommend necessary safeguards for ensuring the continuity of the cycle of Simultaneous Elections and recommend necessary amendments to the Constitution, so that the cycle of Simultaneous Elections is not disturbed.
- (f) Examine the logistics and manpower required, including EVMs, VVPATs, etc., for holding such Simultaneous Elections.
- (g) Examine and recommend the modalities of use of a single electoral roll and electoral identity cards for identification of voters in elections to the House of the People (Lok Sabha), State Legislative Assemblies, Municipalities and Panchayats.

V. CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Committee worked for **191** days, held **65** meetings, and consulted the following stakeholders

- i. Citizens,
- ii. Political Parties,
- iii. Experts, like former Chief Justices and Judges of Supreme Court, former Chief Justices of High Courts, former Chief Election Commissioners, State Election Commissioners,
- iv. Bar Council of India and Law Commission of India,
- v. Apex business organisations like CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM.

A public notice was published on **05.01.2024** in **105** newspapers in **16** languages in all the States and Union territories. **21,558** responses were received from all over India. **80** per cent of the respondents supported Simultaneous Elections. Forty-seven political parties submitted their views and suggestions, out of which **32** supported and **15** opposed Simultaneous Elections.