

18th Dec, 2024

1. The Introduction of 'One Nation, One Election' Bills and Parliamentary Procedures GS 2 (Governance)

• Why in News:

- The government introduced two Bills on "One Nation, One Election" in Lok Sabha amid strong objections from the Opposition INDIA bloc.
- Voting during the introduction saw 269 members in favor and 198 opposing the Bills.
- Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal assured the House that the Bills would be referred to a joint parliamentary committee for detailed examination.

263 VOTE FOR, 198 AGAINST INTRODUCTION OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

One nation, one poll Bills introduced in Lok Sabha, will go to House panel

Most Opp parties oppose the Bills, DMK and NCP (SP) say can be sent to joint panel

DIVYA A & LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 17

THE GOVERNMENT introduced two Bills in the Lok Sabha Tuesday as part of its plans for simultaneous elections across the country, countering the Opposition's charge of the move being "anti-constitutional" and "undermining federal structure". The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill and Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill were approved by the Cabinet last week.



Members of the Treasury bench during the introduction of the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill in Lok Sabha on Tuesday. The two Bills have to be passed for simultaneous elections. (PTI)

• One Nation, One Election

- The concept of "One Nation, One Election" envisions a system in which all state and Lok Sabha elections must be held simultaneously.
- This will entail restructuring the Indian election cycle so that elections to the states and the centre coincide.
- This would imply that **voters will vote for members of the LS and state assemblies on the same day and at the same time** (or in a phased manner as the case may be).

• History of Elections in India

- **Era of simultaneous elections**
 - The first general elections of free India held simultaneously to the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies of the States in 1951.
 - The **next three cycles of elections** also witnessed concurrent Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly elections barring a few stray cases like:
 - Kerala where a mid-term election was held in 1960 on the pre-mature dissolution of the Assembly, and
 - in Nagaland and Pondicherry where the Assembly was created only after the 1962 general elections.
 - The last occasion when we had **near-simultaneous elections was in 1967**.
- **Beginning of the end of simultaneous elections**
 - The fourth Lok Sabha constituted in 1967 was dissolved prematurely in 1971. This was the beginning of the end of simultaneous elections.
 - Extension of the term of Lok Sabha during the National Emergency declared in 1975 and the dissolution of Assemblies of some States after the 1977 Lok Sabha election further disturbed the cycle of concurrent elections.
- **Current status**
 - After the two pre-mature dissolutions of the Lok Sabha in 1998 and 1999, **only four State Assemblies have been going to polls along with the Lok Sabha elections in the last two decades**.
 - We now have **at least two rounds of Assembly general elections every year**.

• The introduction of bills and Opposition's Concerns

- Several Opposition MPs had given notices opposing the introduction of the Bills.
 - **Clauses 72(1) and 72(2) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business** in the Lok Sabha allow any member to give prior notices opposing the introduction of a Bill.
- Main opposition leaders have criticized the Bills, calling them a violation of the federal structure.
- They questioned **why state governments should fall if the central government falls**.
- They also claimed that the ruling government lacked the two-thirds majority required to pass a constitutional amendment.

- Voting during the introduction saw 269 members in favor and 198 opposing the Bills.
- Hence, the Opposition MPs declared the introduction a procedural victory for them.
- **Clarification on Voting Rules**
 - **Introduction Stage**
 - A special majority is not required to introduce a Constitution Amendment Bill or refer it to a Select/Joint Committee.
 - A simple majority suffices at this stage, as per parliamentary rules.
 - **Subsequent Stages**
 - A special majority is mandatory only during later stages of the Bill, such as:
 - Consideration of the Bill
 - Final Passage of the Bill
- **What Does Article 368 Say?**
 - Article 368 of the Constitution specifies:
 - An amendment Bill requires two-thirds majority of members present and voting and a majority of the total membership of the House to pass.
 - After passing both Houses, it must receive Presidential assent to become law.
- **Procedure for Constitution Amendment Bills**
 - **Rule 157 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha: Process for Constitution Amendment Bills**
 - **For motions** like considering the Bill, taking the Select or Joint Committee's report into consideration, or passing the Bill (with or without amendments), the motion is deemed carried if:
 - A majority of the total membership of the House supports it, and
 - At least two-thirds of the members present and voting are in favor.
 - **Rule 158: Voting by Division**
 - Division voting is required when a motion needs both:
 - A majority of the total membership of the House, and
 - A two-thirds majority of the members present and voting.

2. Wroughton's free-tailed Bat GS 3 (Environment)

- **Why in News:** Recently, Wroughton's free-tailed bat has been spotted at the Delhi Development Authority (DDA)'s Yamuna Biodiversity Park
- **About Wroughton's free-tailed Bat:**
 - It is a highly rare **species of molossus bat**.
 - **Characteristics:** It is characterised by its **large size, huge ears** extending beyond the muzzle, and **bicoloured velvet fur**. It is known to be a **powerful flier**.
 - **Habitat:** It roosts in **caves or dark, damp and little warm places**, in moderate colony sizes.
 - **Distribution:** This bat species is **primarily found in the Western Ghats**, where there is only one known breeding colony. Small colonies have also been recorded in **Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya**, and a single individual was noted in Cambodia.
 - **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN:** Data Deficient (Until 2000, the species was considered critically endangered because of a single known population in the Western Ghats. Later it was placed under this category).
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972:** Schedule I
 - **Ecological significance:** It **regulates insect populations and assists in plant pollination**.

UNIQUE SIGHTING IN DELHI Rare species of bat spotted in Yamuna Biodiversity Park

SOPHIA MATHEW
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 17

In a unique sighting, the Wroughton's free-tailed bat, a highly rare species of molossus bat, has been spotted at the Delhi Development Authority (DDA)'s Yamuna Biodiversity Park. This bat species is primarily found in the Western Ghats, where there is only one known breeding colony. Small colonies have also been recorded in the Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya, and a single individual was noted in Cambodia.



Wroughton's free-tailed bat is primarily found in Western Ghats. (Source: Nishu Singh, citizen of Delhi Biodiversity Park)

Park," said Rajeev Khachar, biodiversity expert and scientific in-charge under the Biodiversity Parks Programme. A statement by the DDA Biodiversity Park states that the species is easily recognisable to bat researchers. It is characterised by its large size, huge ears extending beyond the muzzle, and bi-coloured velvet fur. The bat roosts in caves or dark, damp, and slightly warm places in moderate colonies. Wroughton's free-tailed bat is also known to assist in pollination. Until 2000, the species was considered critically endangered because of a single known pop-

ulation in the Western Ghats. The species was placed on the List, with discoveries in three different localities, the bat

home to around 14 species, four of which have been considered locally extinct: the Indian false vampire, the black-headed fruit bat, the Egyptian free-tailed bat, and the Indian golden.

According to Khachar, despite its discovery, accurate ap- very little is known about the bat's feeding ecology. The bat species has powerful flying ca- abilities, allowing it to forage long distances.

The sighting is significant for Delhi because it is known to be

According to the statement, "two decades of ecological restoration" have contributed to the establishment of "very spe- cialised niches". It also noted that the restored forest of the Yamuna Biodiversity Park, managed by the DDA, has become the only known roosting site for the Wroughton's free-tailed bat.

"This is a testimony of how long scientific interventions ca- librate rewilding of many species, including their histor- ical geographical ranges," the statement added.

3. Arctic Tundra as a Carbon Source GS 3 (Environment)

- Why in News:** The Arctic Tundra has transitioned from a carbon sink to a carbon emitter as confirmed by a new analysis in the 'Arctic Report Card' by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
- About Arctic Tundra:**
 - The **Arctic Tundra** is a vast, **treeless biome** characterized by its cold, dry, and rocky terrain.
 - The term "tundra" originates from the **Finnish word tunturi**, meaning a 'treeless plain.'
- Characteristics of the Arctic Tundra:**
 - Permafrost:** It refers to permanently frozen soil, starting within a meter of the surface. During **summer**, only the upper layer thaws, while deeper layers remain frozen.
 - The frozen layer restricts plant root growth and prevents **tree growth**, resulting in a treeless landscape.
 - Soil composition:** The tundra's soil is **rocky** and nutrient-poor due to low decomposition rates.
 - Organic material accumulates in the form of **peat (decayed sphagnum moss)** and **humus (organic matter)**, making it a significant **carbon sink**.
 - Geographic location:** The Arctic tundra is the **northernmost biome**, covering areas north of the Arctic Circle up to the **polar ice cap**, parts of Canada, Iceland, and Greenland.
 - It spans approximately **5 million km²**.
 - Climate:** Temperatures range from **5°C in summer to -60°C in winter**, with mean temperatures below **0°C for 6–10 months**.
 - Annual precipitation** is low, ranging between **150–250 mm**, but evaporation is minimal.
 - Features **24-hour sunlight in summer** and **24-hour darkness in winter**.
 - Natural vegetation:** Vegetation is predominantly **herbaceous** due to the cold climate and short growing season. Includes grasses, mosses (e.g., reindeer moss), lichens, and liverworts.
 - Woody plants like **dwarf willows** remain short and spread to withstand high winds.
 - Animal life:** Large mammals such as **polar bears, caribou, musk ox, and Arctic foxes** inhabit the tundra.
 - Smaller animals like **lemmings and Arctic hares** adapt with fur that changes color seasonally.
 - Migratory birds, such as **loons and snow geese**, breed in the tundra during summer.
 - Arctic Tundra as a Carbon Sink:** Despite the absence of trees, the Arctic Tundra is a **significant carbon sink**.
 - This is due to the **accumulation of organic matter** in: **Peat** (Decayed sphagnum moss) and **Humus** (Decomposed organic material).
 - The cold conditions slow decomposition, trapping carbon in the **permafrost** for millennia.
- Reasons for Emissions:**
 - Thawing permafrost:** Rising temperatures activate **microbes**, breaking down organic matter and releasing **CO₂** and **CH₄ (methane)**.
 - Increased wildfires** release additional **GHGs** and accelerate **permafrost thawing**.
 - Temperature trends:** The Arctic is warming **four times faster** than the global average. 2024 marked the **second-warmest year** since records began in 1900.
 - Global carbon trends:**
 - CO₂ emissions** in 2024 are projected to be **6 billion tonnes**, up from **40.6 billion tonnes** in 2023.
 - Land-use changes** add **2 billion tonnes of emissions** annually.

Arctic tundra emitting more carbon than it absorbs, confirms study

ALINDOHAJIAN
NOAA/CI/121210000177

How does the tundra store carbon?
In typical ecosystems, plants absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere through photosynthesis. These plants grow, die, and are eaten by animals which also grow and die. When they die, the carbon in the corpses feeds microorganisms which break it down into CO₂ and methane (CH₄) and release it into the atmosphere. In the Arctic, however, the cold temperatures slow down the decomposition of organic matter. As a result, the permafrost is thawing, releasing methane in the soil and increasing active and breaking down the organic matter, releasing CO₂ and CH₄ into the atmosphere.

CLIMATE
Arctic tundra stores the decomposition of organic matter in the soil and in the permafrost. This carbon is trapped for thousands of years in a layer of permafrost — a ground that stays frozen for at least two years straight — trapping CO₂ from getting released back into the atmosphere. Scientists estimate that Arctic soils store more than 1,600 billion metric tonnes of carbon, which is about double the amount present in the atmosphere, according to a report by the Arctic Report Card and a scientist at the US National Science and Technology Center.

The Holokullu tundra in Svalbard, Norway in 2023.

Why is the Arctic tundra emitting more carbon than it is absorbing?
In recent years, the Arctic tundra's ability to store and absorb more carbon has been at risk. The new analysis, which incorporated more data and better methods of measurement, confirmed that the tundra is now a net emitter of CO₂ and methane (CH₄) — a net emitter of greenhouse gases. Another reason that more years the Arctic has warmed is an increase in the frequency and intensity of wildfires. Last year, the Arctic saw its warmest summer in the global era, and the Arctic tundra's carbon sink was hit hard. Wildfires emit a lot of CO₂ into the atmosphere, and also speed up the thawing of permafrost. Wildfires and rising temperatures together between 2001 and 2015, caused the Arctic tundra to release more carbon than it stored in many millions, the report said.

De will the Arctic tundra continue to absorb carbon?
The analysis said it is still possible for the Arctic tundra to absorb more carbon than it emits. But the only way to do so is to reduce global CO₂ emissions. Braden Lister, a scientist at the Woodwell Climate Research Center who contributed to the Arctic Report Card, said "We have a long way to go to get the Arctic tundra back to a carbon sink. We need to get lower levels of emissions from power plants... That's the only way to get the work towards more aggressive emissions reductions." However, this is unlikely to happen in the near future, as the world continues to emit CO₂ at a rapid pace. Lister said that the Arctic tundra is a "carbon sink" only if we can keep global CO₂ emissions low. "We need to get lower levels of emissions from power plants... That's the only way to get the work towards more aggressive emissions reductions."

4. Simultaneous Elections Bills Tabled in Lok Sabha, Referred to Parliamentary Committee GS 2 (Governance)

• Why in News:

- The government introduced two Bills in the Lok Sabha to enable simultaneous elections: The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill.
- Constitution Amendment Bill aims to synchronize the terms of the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies. On the other hand, the Consequential Amendment Bill aims to amend relevant laws for Union Territories and Delhi to facilitate simultaneous polls.
- These bills were passed for introduction with 269 votes in favor and 198 against. The bill will now be sent to the Joint Parliamentary Committee.
- A high-level committee chaired by former President Ram Nath Kovind had earlier recommended simultaneous elections.

• Key Takeaways from the Bills

- **Scope of Simultaneous Polls**
 - Applies only to Parliament and state Assemblies, excluding municipal corporations.
- **Timeline for Implementation**
 - Realistically, **simultaneous polls may begin with the 2034 election cycle**, assuming the 18th and 19th Lok Sabhas complete full five-year terms.
 - The President will issue a notification on the first sitting of the Lok Sabha after the general election to implement the amendments.
- **Mid-term Election Provisions**
 - The Bills include provisions for situations where mid-term elections might be required at the state or central level.
- **Exclusion of Municipal Elections**
 - Municipal elections are excluded to avoid the need for ratification by at least half of the state legislatures, a more complex process.

• Proposed Amendments in the One Nation, One Election Bills

- **Alignment with High-Level Committee Recommendations**
 - The amendments are based on recommendations by the High-Level Committee on One Nation, One Election.
 - The committee was chaired by former President Ram Nath Kovind and submitted its report in March 2024.
- **Key Features of the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024**
 - **Amendments and New Article**
 - **Amendment of Three Articles:** The Bill proposes changes to three existing articles of the Constitution.
 - It amends **Articles 83** (duration of Houses of Parliament), **172** (duration of state legislatures), and **327** (power of Parliament to make provisions with respect to elections to Legislatures).
 - **Insertion of Article 82A:** A new provision (Article 82A, clauses 1-6) is introduced to enable simultaneous elections. This article is placed after Article 82, which pertains to delimitation.
 - **Provisions of Article 82A**
 - **Timeline for Implementation - 82A (1)**
 - The President can notify the appointed date for the changes after the first sitting of the Lok Sabha following a general election.

One Nation, One Election Bills

The government has proposed to add a new article to the Constitution and amend three other provisions so that elections to state Assemblies can be held simultaneously with the election to Lok Sabha



- **Curtailed Tenures for State Assemblies - 82A (2)**
 - Assemblies elected after the appointed date but before the Lok Sabha's term ends will have their terms curtailed to align with the Lok Sabha's full five-year term.
- **Election Commission's Role in Conducting Simultaneous Elections - 82A (3)**
 - The Election Commission of India (ECI) is tasked with conducting general elections for the Lok Sabha and all Legislative Assemblies simultaneously.
- **Definition of Simultaneous Elections - 82A (4)**
 - Simultaneous elections are defined as "general elections held for constituting the House of the People and all the Legislative Assemblies together."
- **Exception Clause for Assembly Elections - 82A (5)**
 - The ECI may recommend postponing a particular Assembly election if it determines simultaneous elections are not feasible.
 - The President can then issue an order for those elections to be conducted separately.
- **Alignment of Deferred Elections - 82A (6)**
 - If an Assembly election is deferred, the term of that Assembly will still end with the full term of the Lok Sabha elected in the general election.
- **Proposed Amendments to Lok Sabha's Term and Dissolution**
 - **Changes to Article 83: Lok Sabha's Term Adjustment**
 - **Fixed Term with Flexibility:** Article 83 prescribes a fixed five-year term for Lok Sabha unless dissolved earlier.
 - **New Clauses for Unexpired Terms:** If Lok Sabha is dissolved before completing its full term, the next Lok Sabha will only serve the unexpired period of the original term.
 - Example: If Lok Sabha is dissolved after 3 years and 2 months, the subsequent Lok Sabha will serve the remaining 22 months.
 - **Clarification on New House:**
 - The new Lok Sabha formed after a mid-term election will not be a continuation of the dissolved House.
 - Pending Bills in the dissolved House will expire, as they do after a full term.
 - **Amendments to Article 327: Enabling Simultaneous Elections**
 - Article 327 gives Parliament the authority to legislate on matters related to elections, including electoral rolls and delimitation of constituencies.
 - The amendment proposes adding "conduct of simultaneous elections" to this list.
 - This ensures Parliament can make provisions to align elections for both Houses of Parliament and State Legislatures.
- **Proposed Amendments for State Assemblies - Changes to Article 172 (Duration of State Legislatures)**
 - Similar to Lok Sabha, state Assemblies' terms will also align with the "unexpired term" provision.
 - If a state Assembly is dissolved before its full term, elections will be conducted for the remaining term of the dissolved Assembly.
- **The Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024**
 - **Purpose of the Bill** - Align Union Territories with the framework for simultaneous elections.
 - This is because Union Territories are governed under a separate constitutional scheme that is different from states.
 - **Proposed Amendments**
 - **Government of Union Territories Act, 1963:** Adjustments to enable synchronized elections in Union Territories.
 - **Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991:** Similar changes for Delhi.
 - **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019:** Amendments to include Jammu and Kashmir within the simultaneous election framework.

5. Minority Rights in India **GS 2 (Constitution)**

• **Why in News:**

- Minority rights are a cornerstone of democratic governance, ensuring the preservation of cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity.
- Recognizing this, the Indian Constitution and international frameworks like the United Nations' 1992 Declaration on Minority Rights aim to protect minority communities.
- Franklin Roosevelt aptly noted, "**No democracy can long survive which does not accept as fundamental to its very existence the recognition of the rights of minorities.**"

• **Historical Context:**

- The concept of minority rights traces its origins to 19th-century European constitutional frameworks:
 - **Austria (1867):** Recognized ethnic minorities' rights to preserve their languages and national identities.
 - **Hungary (1868):** Legislated similar protections.
 - **Post-World War I Treaties:** Incorporated minority protection clauses in agreements with nations like **Poland** and **Czechoslovakia**.
- India incorporated these principles during its Constitution drafting process, emphasizing the preservation of diversity.

• **Provisions in the Indian Constitution:**

- **Article 29:** Grants all citizens the right to conserve their distinct culture, language, or script.
 - **Significance:** Recognizes and protects diverse cultural identities, ensuring equality and dignity.
- **Article 30:** Empowers religious and linguistic minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.
- **Judicial Interpretation**
 - The Supreme Court views Article 30 as integral to equality and non-discrimination.
 - Recent judgments (e.g., Aligarh Muslim University, 2024) uphold the minority character of institutions of national importance.
- **Article 350 A:** Mandates primary education in one's mother tongue.
- **Article 350 B:** Provides for appointing a Special Officer for linguistic minorities.
- The Constitution also supports personal laws for various communities, exemplified by the customary laws of the Nagas.

• **Defining 'Minority':**

- The term "minority" lacks a universal definition in the Constitution. However:
 - **Judicial Interpretation:** The Supreme Court, in cases like TMA Pai Foundation (2002), defines minorities at the state level. For example, Hindus are considered minorities in Punjab and north-eastern states.
 - **Indicia for Minority Institutions:**
 - Originator's intent to serve minority communities.
 - Operational factors like funding, infrastructure, and administration.

• **Judicial Safeguards:**

- While minority institutions enjoy autonomy, they are not exempt from oversight:
 - **Maladministration Prohibition:** Governments can enforce regulations to maintain institutional standards.
 - **Fair Aid:** Article 30(2) prohibits discrimination against minority institutions when granting aid.

• **Rationale Behind Minority Rights:**

- The preservation of diversity underpins these rights. Cultural identity thrives not in isolation but within an enabling environment. Thus:

The Constitution on minority rights

The preservation of diversity is a cornerstone of democratic governance, ensuring the recognition of the rights of minorities. The Indian Constitution, in its commitment to equality and dignity, has enshrined provisions to protect minority communities.



- **Individual vs. Group Rights:** Individual equality (Articles 14-18, 19, 25) is insufficient without group recognition.
- **Judicial Observations:** Courts consistently emphasize the necessity of special protections for minorities to achieve substantive equality.
- **Significance in Contemporary India:**
 - **Constitutional Legacy:** Articles 25-30 symbolize India's commitment to pluralism.
 - **Global Relevance:** Aligns with international principles, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- **Conclusion:**
 - India's constitutional framework ensures a delicate balance between individual equality and group recognition.
 - By safeguarding minority rights, the Constitution strengthens the nation's democratic ethos, fostering an inclusive society that respects its rich diversity.
 - However, evolving socio-political dynamics call for continued vigilance and adaptation to uphold these principles effectively



MCQ Current Affairs
18th Dec, 2024

1. Consider the following statements regarding the Wroughton's free-tailed bat:

- A. It is primarily found in the Western Ghats.
- B. It is categorized as a critically endangered species under the IUCN Red List.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) A only
- b) B only
- c) A and B
- d) Neither of two

2. Consider the following statements regarding the Short Neck Clam:

- A. It is a bivalve mollusk mainly found in the brackish water of Ashtamudi Lake.
- B. Its shell is used as raw material for the manufacture of cement and calcium carbide.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) A only
- b) B only
- c) A and B
- d) Neither of two

3. Consider the following statements regarding Article 30 of the Constitution of India:

- A. It grants all religious and linguistic minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- B. It prohibits discrimination against minority-managed institutions when granting aid.
- C. It recognizes the right of any section of citizens with a distinct language, script, or culture to conserve the same.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

4. "Mayotte" a part of the Comoros archipelago, is situated in:

- a) Indian Ocean
- b) Pacific Ocean
- c) Atlantic Ocean
- d) Arctic Ocean

5. Consider the following statements regarding the Arctic Tundra:

- A. It is a treeless biome characterized by its cold, dry and rocky terrain
- B. It covers the parts of Canada, Iceland and Greenland

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) A only
- b) B only
- c) A and B
- d) Neither of two

Answers Current Affairs
18th Dec, 2024

1. a
2. c
3. b
4. a
5. c

