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JPC on One Nation One Election Nears Report on the 129th Amendment

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JPC on One Nation One Election Nears Report on the 129th Amendment

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WHY IN NEWS

*The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) examining the and the **Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024** concluded two days of consultations in Goa on July 10-11, 2026, its **ninth state consultation**. The Committee, chaired by **P.P. Chaudhary**, is expected to adopt its report around **July 17, 2026**, with the chairperson publicly targeting a **2029 rollout** of simultaneous elections.*

WHAT HAPPENED IN GOA

The Goa leg of the consultation was a full-spectrum exercise. The Committee met **Chief Minister Pramod Sawant**, the **State Election Commission**, the **Speaker of the Legislative Assembly**, the **Leader of the Opposition** and a panel of **constitutional experts**. The pattern mirrors the eight earlier state visits: the JPC hears the executive, the electoral machinery, both sides of the legislature and academic opinion, because the amendment touches all four.

Goa matters as a test case precisely because it is small. A state with 40 assembly seats and a history of frequent government changes offers a live illustration of the very problem the Bill claims to solve, and of the very risk critics warn about: what happens to a legislature that falls before its term ends.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE BILL

The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024 does not simply declare that all elections shall be held together. It builds a mechanism.

Article 82A: The New Provision

The Bill proposes to insert a new **Article 82A**, the operative heart of the scheme. It provides that the President shall, by public notification issued on the **date of the first sitting of the Lok Sabha after a general election**, bring the provision into force. That date becomes the “**appointed date**.” All State Legislative Assemblies constituted after the appointed date will have terms that expire together with the term of that Lok Sabha, even if this means a truncated term for a newly elected assembly.

Consequential Amendments

ARTICLE	EXISTING SUBJECT	EFFECT OF THE BILL
Article 82A	New	Introduces simultaneous elections and the “appointed date”
Article 83	Duration of Houses of Parliament	Amended to accommodate full and unexpired terms
Article 172	Duration of State Legislatures	Amended so assembly terms sync with the Lok Sabha
Article 327	Parliament’s power over elections	Widened to include “conduct of simultaneous elections”

The Companion Bill

The **Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024** aligns the assemblies of Union Territories with legislatures, namely **Delhi** (via the **Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991**), **Puducherry** and **Jammu and Kashmir**. These bodies exist under ordinary law rather than under Articles 168 to 212, so a separate statute is needed to bring them into the same cycle.

THE KOVIND COMMITTEE BLUEPRINT

The Bill descends from the **High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections**, chaired by former President **Ram Nath Kovind**, which submitted its report in **March 2024**. Its central recommendation was a **two-step synchronisation**:

- Step one:** synchronise the **Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies**.
- Step two:** hold **local body elections** (panchayats and municipalities) within **100 days** of the general election, through a proposed **Article 324A**.

The distinction between the two steps is constitutionally decisive. Article 82A, dealing with Parliament and state assemblies, is argued by the government to be passable by a **special majority alone**. Article 324A, because it touches local government and the powers of State Election Commissions, would require **ratification by not less than half the State Legislatures** under the **proviso to Article 368(2)**. That ratification requirement is why the local-body element has been held back.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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Simultaneous elections are not a new idea in India; they are the original design. The country held **simultaneous elections in 1951-52, 1957, 1962 and 1967**. The cycle broke down from **1968-69**, when premature dissolutions of state assemblies and later of the Lok Sabha itself untethered the calendars. What is proposed now is therefore a restoration, but a restoration that must be engineered by constitutional text rather than sustained by political stability.

THE DEBATE

The Case For

- **Fiscal and administrative economy.** A single national mobilisation of security forces, polling staff and machinery, rather than a near-continuous cycle.
- **Reduced policy paralysis.** The **Model Code of Conduct** freezes new schemes and appointments whenever a state goes to the polls, which under the present staggered calendar can be several times a year.
- **Voter fatigue and campaign expenditure**, both of which climb with electoral frequency.

The Case Against

- **Federalism** (<https://ujjayi.com/terms/federalism/>). Critics argue that tying state assembly terms to the Lok Sabha subordinates state political cycles to the national one, and that the **basic structure doctrine** (<https://ujjayi.com/terms/basic-structure-doctrine/>) protects federalism.
- **Article 356 risk.** If a state government falls, the constitutional temptation to bridge the gap through **President's Rule** until the next synchronised poll grows sharper.
- **Curtailment or extension of terms.** A newly elected assembly could serve only a fraction of five years merely to fit the cycle, which weakens the **mandate** (<https://ujjayi.com/vocab/mandate/>) voters gave it.
- **The hung house problem.** Where no party commands a majority, the Bill's answer is a **mid-term election for the unexpired term only**, which raises the question of accountability to an electorate voting for a stub of a term.

WAY FORWARD

The report expected around **July 17, 2026** will be the first authoritative parliamentary word on whether these objections can be answered within the text. The genuine constitutional question is not whether simultaneous elections are desirable, but whether the machinery for restoring them can be built without eroding the autonomy of state legislatures that the Constitution independently guarantees.

UPSC RELEVANCE

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GS Paper 2: Indian Constitution, amendment procedure, federalism, Parliament and State Legislatures, Election Commission and electoral reforms.

Prelims pointers:

- The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024 proposes to insert **Article 82A** and amends **Articles 83, 172 and 327**.
- The “**appointed date**” is notified by the **President** on the first sitting of the Lok Sabha after a general election.
- The companion **Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024** covers Delhi (GNCTD Act, 1991), Puducherry and Jammu and Kashmir.
- The **High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections** was chaired by **Ram Nath Kovind** and reported in **March 2024**.
- The proposed **Article 324A** (local bodies within 100 days) would need ratification by **not less than half the State Legislatures** under the proviso to **Article 368(2)**.
- India held simultaneous elections in **1951-52, 1957, 1962 and 1967**; the cycle broke from **1968-69**.
- The JPC is chaired by **P.P. Chaudhary**.

Mains question: “The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024 seeks to restore simultaneous elections in India. Examine the fiscal and administrative case for the proposal against the federalism and accountability concerns it raises, and assess whether it survives the basic structure test.” (15 marks, 250 words)

FACTS CORNER

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Bill: Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024, plus the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

JPC chair: P.P. Chaudhary. Goa consultation on July 10-11, 2026 was the ninth state consultation; report expected around July 17, 2026; target rollout 2029.

New Article 82A: simultaneous elections, with an “appointed date” notified by the President on the first sitting of the Lok Sabha after a general election.

Articles amended: 83 (duration of Houses of Parliament), 172 (duration of State Legislatures), 327 (Parliament’s power over elections).

Kovind Committee: High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections, reported March 2024; two-step synchronisation, local bodies within 100 days via a proposed Article 324A.

Article 368(2) proviso: ratification by not less than half the State Legislatures needed for the local-body step.

Simultaneous election years: 1951-52, 1957, 1962, 1967; cycle broke from 1968-69.

Sources: *Press Information Bureau* (<https://pib.gov.in/>), *Ministry of Law and Justice* (<https://lawmin.gov.in/>), *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com/>)

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