

Date: 20 Sep 2024

## A fair share: On the concerns of high performing States

(The Hindu, 20-09-24)

### What is the government's proposal for simultaneous elections?

- Accept recommendations of high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind
- Hold Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections simultaneously as the first step
- Conduct municipal and panchayat polls within 100 days of the general election
- Requires constitutional amendments to be passed in Parliament and State Assemblies

### What are the main reasons given for proposing simultaneous elections?

- Reduce costs of conducting elections
- Improve voter turnout by reducing election fatigue
- Reduce the frequency of imposition of Model Code of Conduct, allowing for more continuous governance
- Address the issue of political parties being in prolonged campaign mode → Reduces polarisation tendencies that generally peak during elections
- Potentially reduce black money circulation and corruption associated with frequent elections
- Create a more stable policy environment by aligning electoral cycles → Helps in attracting foreign investment

### Why is the proposal considered anti-federal?

- Lack of empirical data supporting cost reduction claims
- Recommendation for "midterm" elections with shortened tenures if a State Assembly is dissolved early
- Subsumes multi-tier elections into simultaneous mode, potentially reducing the importance of each tier
- Ignores the distinct roles of representatives at different levels of government
- Disregards varied voter choices based on party affiliation, candidate strength, ideological positions, or constituency-specific reasons
- May require cutting short the tenures of some State governments
- Centralizes the electoral process, undermining the federal structure

*Can you answer the following question?*

*Critically analyze the proposal for simultaneous elections in India, discussing its potential impact on federalism.*

## Should children be barred from social media?

(The Hindu, 20-09-24)

The Australian Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, has announced a plan to set a minimum age to use social media platforms.

- In India, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 requires verifiable parental consent for children's access to platforms collecting personal data

**What are the challenges in implementing age restrictions on social media?**

- Difficulty in verifying age online
- Children's ability to circumvent barriers
- Low digital literacy among parents, especially in countries like India
- Shared device usage in many households
- Burden of compliance often falls on parents

**How can children's online safety be improved?**

- Educate parents on supporting children's positive digital engagement
- Include digital literacy and online safety in school curricula
- Teach children to be resilient online
- Address 'sharenting' and protect children's privacy rights
- Regulate child influencers and their earnings
- Implement age-appropriate design codes for platforms

**What responsibilities do social media platforms have in ensuring children's safety?**

- Design better, safer spaces for children and young people
- Implement age assurance technologies while considering privacy concerns
- Make design changes to minimize risks for children (e.g., better default settings)
- Increase transparency about design changes and their impact on children's behavior
- Balance using technology for both protection and user experience

*Can you answer the following question?*

*In light of the global debate on children's access to social media, critically examine the challenges and potential solutions for ensuring online safety for minors.*

