



TATHASTU ICS



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AP/KK/AJ

| S.NO. | TOPIC |
|-------|---|
| 1. | ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION |
| 2. | STATUS OF THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT |
| 3. | WHAT DRIVES THE PROCESS OF ATLANTIFICATION IN ARCTIC SEAS? |

ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

SOURCE: [TIMES OF INDIA](#), [THE HINDU](#), [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- A **committee** led by **former President Ram Nath Kovind** was established by the Union government to investigate the **viability of simultaneous Lok Sabha and state Assembly elections** under the slogan "One Nation, One Election."
- If India succeeds in doing that, it will be just **the fourth nation** in the world to conduct elections at the same time.



ABOUT ONE NATION ONE ELECTION:

- The phrase "**One Nation, One Election**" refers to the proposal of **holding simultaneous elections** for the **Lok Sabha**, the lower house of the Indian Parliament, and for all state legislative bodies throughout the nation.
- Currently, Lok Sabha elections and state legislative assembly elections are held separately in India for the 28 states and 8 union territories, and these elections might take place at different periods, creating frequent electoral cycles.

A BRIEF HISTORY

- Elections held simultaneously are not a new idea.
- Throughout the period from 1951 to 1967, elections for the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies were held concurrently.
- In 1968 and 1969, the cycle was briefly broken by the early dissolution of a few Legislative Assemblies. Fourth Lok Sabha elections were held in 1971 after its own premature dissolution in 1970. In accordance with Article 352 (Emergency), the Fifth Lok Sabha's term was prolonged till 1977.
- The cycle of simultaneous elections has since been severely broken as a result of numerous instances of dissolution of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.

BENEFITS OF ONE NATION ONE ELECTION:

"One Nation, One Election" is a concept that seeks to synchronize these elections in order to achieve a number of benefits, including:

- **Reducing election expenditure:** Elections can be expensive to hold if they are held at various times, both financially and in terms of the administrative resources that must be allocated.
 - It might be said that the 8,000 crore (Rupees 1,500 crore annually) spent by the Election Commission over five years, or Rupees 27 per voter annually, is a "massive" cost associated.

- **Impact on governance and development programs:** During general elections to Lok Sabha, MCC is applicable throughout the country, and during elections to Assemblies, the code is applied across the entire State.
 - According to NITI Aayog's analysis, the Model Code of Conduct would be applicable for at least 4 months each year in some or all regions of the nation.
- **For increasing voter turnout:** Holding simultaneous elections will result in a higher voter turnout because people may be more inclined to vote in contests that have a bigger influence on both the national and state levels.
- **Administrative machinery:** To ensure smooth, peaceful, and unbiased elections, the Election Commission enlists the assistance of a sizable number of government employees (teachers, other staff, etc.), as well as the armed forces (CAPF, state police, Home Guard, etc.).
 - It diverts resources from the armed police force that could otherwise be used for other internal security tasks, which are its fundamental duties.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING ONE NATION ONE ELECTION:

- **Constitutional amendments:** To consider **regional differences and state-specific challenges**, India's federal system and Constitution permit separate elections at the state and national levels.
 - To synchronize elections at all levels, the Constitution would need to be amended, which would take a long time.
- **Administrative challenges:** A significant administrative problem is managing security, logistics, and the deployment of election staff for concurrent elections around the nation.
 - It is essential to ensure the fairness and efficiency of such a massive electoral process by the Election Commission of India.
- **Political challenges:** Aligning state legislature terms with the Lok Sabha's would be necessary to hold simultaneous elections.
 - This would entail cutting or lengthening some state governments' terms, which can be legally and politically controversial.
- **Impact on regional parties:** Simultaneous elections worry smaller and regional parties that their influence and visibility may suffer.
 - They contend that local parties and issues may be overshadowed by national politics.
- **Logistic challenges:** Currently, each polling place has a single voting machine that is utilized to conduct the vote.
 - Since the ECI must supply two sets of EVMs and VVPATs for each polling station (one for the Legislative Assembly election and the other for the Lok Sabha election), the requirements for staging simultaneous elections would double.
- **Voter education:** For simultaneous elections, it is important to coordinate voter education initiatives and awareness campaigns.
 - Or else this can be politically motivated and might persuade people to vote for candidates who support national issues in state elections

SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES:

- **SOUTH AFRICA:** The proportional representation (PR) framework is the foundation of South Africa's electoral system, which is used to elect members of the national legislature and provincial legislatures. In South Africa, provincial and national elections are held concurrently every five years.

- **SWEDEN:** Every four years, in September, general elections for the Riksdag, regional/county council assemblies, and municipal councils are held. On the same day, these elections are held. Sweden has a proportional electoral system.
- **BELGIUM:** Elections for the European Parliament and the Federal Parliament of Belgium both take place every five years. This planned strategy guarantees a uniform voting procedure, encouraging voter participation and administrative effectiveness.
- **UNITED KINGDOM:** The Fixed Term Act 2011, passed by the Westminster Parliament, established a fixed term for the Parliament and a 5-year cycle for general elections.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM VARIOUS COMMITTEES:

| COMMITTEE | RECOMMENDATIONS |
|--|---|
| 1. LAW COMMISSION OF INDIA 170th Report 1999 | The report noted that after 1967, elections became unreliable as a result of the Constitution's Article 356 being invoked frequently, and what had once been an exceptional circumstance. |
| 2. PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON LAW AND JUSTICE 79th Report 2015 | The Committee underlined various arguments in its Report on the "Feasibility of Holding Simultaneous Elections to the House of the People (Lok Sabha) and State Legislative Assemblies," including costs, policy paralysis during MCC, labour demands, etc. |
| 3. NITI AAYOG (BIBEK DEBROY AND KISHORE DESAI) 2017 | Underlined the significance of holding simultaneous elections that addressed the nation's diverse requirements since national parties would fight for regional concerns while regional parties would fight for national ones. |
| 4. LAW COMMISSION OF INDIA 2018 | The Law Commission, presided over by Justice B S Chauhan, stated in a draught report, that simultaneous elections could not be held within the current parameters of the Constitution. It would require constitutional amendments. |

WAY FORWARD:

- **Public awareness:** Promote public awareness of the advantages and consequences of holding elections concurrently.
- **Pilot projects:** Conduct experimental projects in a few states to assess the viability and difficulties. These pilot programs can aid in identifying and resolving logistical, clerical, and political problems.
- **Political Consensus:** It's important to create political consensus. Consult and converse in depth with political parties to win their support and handle their issues.
- **Gradual Transition:** If total synchronization is not possible right now, consider a gradual transition by coordinating national and state elections over a few cycles, allowing states with present assemblies to finish their mandates prior to the transition.
- **Best practices:** Study examples of countries around the world that hold elections simultaneously to learn from their experiences and best practices.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS:

The terms of the state legislative assemblies can be adjusted to be shorter or longer than those of the Lok Sabha, and constitutional amendment would be required in the following areas:

- ❖ Article 83: According to Article 83, the Lok Sabha's tenure will begin on the day of its first sitting and last for five years.
- ❖ Article 85: The President may dissolve the Lok Sabha under Article 85.
- ❖ Article 172: According to Article 172, the legislative assembly's term will last five years be starting on the day of its first meeting.
- ❖ Article 174: The state's governor is given the authority to dissolve the Legislative Assembly under Article 174.
- ❖ Article 356: In the event that the constitutional machinery fails, the Central Government is authorized to establish the President's Rule.

STATUTORY PROVISIONS:

The Representation of the People Act,1951

- ✓ Notification for general elections to the House of the People and the State Legislative Assemblies is covered in Sections 14 and 15 of the RPA Act, 1951.
- ✓ Bye-elections to the House of the People and State Legislative Assemblies are covered in Part IX of the RPA Act, 1951.



STATUS OF THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

A three-judge panel headed by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud ordered the Right to Information Act's provisions to be properly implemented by the state information commissioners (SIC) and the Central Information Commission (CIC).

ABOUT RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT,2005:

- An important piece of legislation in India that gives citizens access to information maintained by public authorities is the Right to Information Act (RTI Act) of 2005.
- Promoting accountability, openness, and good governance in the operation of governmental organizations is the main goal of the RTI Act.
- The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) was one of the most well-known NGOs that was instrumental in promoting the RTI Act in India.

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES AND PROVISIONS OF THE ACT:

- **Applicability of the law:** All government organizations, including those at the Union, state, and local levels as well as public authorities and agencies, are subject to the RTI Act.
- **Request for Information:** An information request can be made to a public authority by any Indian citizen. Requests may also be submitted by non-citizens, such as foreign nationals.
- **Public Information Officer:** A Public Information Officer (PIO), who is in charge of accepting and responding to RTI requests, must be appointed by each public entity.
- **Time Frame:** Within 30 days after receiving the RTI request, the PIO must answer. If consultation with outside parties or other departments is necessary, this time frame may in some cases be increased to 45 days.
- **Fees:** The provision of information may be subject to a fair fee from public entities. For those who fall below the poverty level, there are opportunities for fee waivers or reductions.

BENEFITS OF THIS LEGISLATION:

- **Accountability and Transparency:** The RTI Act encourages accountability in government operations by enabling citizens to access data stored by public bodies.
- **Reduction in Corruption:** The RTI Act's increased transparency and public scrutiny can aid in discouraging corrupt behaviour within government organizations.
- **Empowerment of Citizens:** Citizens can use it to call attention to corruption and demand accountability.
- **Whistleblower Protection:** The Act contains safeguards to safeguard individuals who reveal wrongdoing or corruption inside governmental organizations.
 - People are more likely to come forward with information when they are protected.
- **Increased civic engagement:** RTI supports activism and civic involvement. It enables people, civil society groups, and journalists to look into and report on topics of general interest.

ROLE OF CENTRAL INFORMATION COMMISSION:

- **Establishment:** In accordance with the provisions of the Right to Information Act (2005), the Central Government established the CIC in 2005. There is no constitutional body for it.
- **Membership:** A Chief Information Commissioner and a maximum of ten Information Commissioners make up the membership.

- **Powers and functions of CIC:** To receive and investigate complaints about information requests made under RTI, 2005, from any person.
 - If there are sufficient grounds, it may order an investigation into any topic (Suo moto authority).
 - The Commission has the same summoning, requesting of documents, etc., powers as a civil court when conducting an investigation.
- **STATE INFORMATION COMMISSION:** The State Government established it.
 - There will be one State Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and a maximum of ten State Information Commissioners (IC) in the commission.

MAJOR AMENDMENTS TO THE RTI ACT:

RIGHT TO INFORMATION AMENDMENT ACT 2019

- The Chief Information Commissioner and an Information Commissioner (Centre and States) will occupy their positions for the duration of the Central Government's designated tenure. Prior to this change, their term was set at five years.
- The Chief Information Commissioner and an Information Commissioner (Centre and States) shall receive salaries, allowances, and other terms of service as set forth by the Central Government.
- Before this amendment, were comparable to those of the Chief Election Commissioner.
- On the basis that it weakens the law and gives the central government more authority, the RTI (Amendment) Act, 2019, has drawn criticism.

KEY POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

The bill seeks to empower the central govt on deciding salaries, and other terms of service of information commissioners.

■ RTI Act, 2005 ■ RTI (Amendment) Bill, 2019

| Term | Quantum of salary | Deductions in salary |
|---|---|---|
| <p>■ CHIEF information commissioner (CIC) and information commissioners will have a tenure of five years</p> <p>■ CENTRE will notify the tenure of all information commissioners (ICs) at state and central level</p> | <p>■ CIC pay equivalent to CECs, Central ICs and state CIC to election commissioners and state ICs to chief secretary</p> <p>■ SALARIES and allowances of these officers will be determined by the Central government</p> | <p>■ IF such officials are receiving pension or other retirement benefits, their salaries will be reduced by an amount equal to the pension</p> <p>■ THESE provisions have been removed</p> |

Source: PRS Legislative Research

IMPORTANT JUDGEMENTS OF THE SUPREME COURT

| CASE | JUDGEMENT |
|---|--|
| 1. PUCL vs UNION OF INDIA 2004 | The right to information is regarded as a basic right under Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution, and this case is seen as the forerunner to the RTI Act. |
| 2. CIC vs HIGH COURT OF GUJARAT 2012 | This decision made it clear that requests for information can be made of the Chief Justice of India's office under the RTI Act. |
| 3. CBSE CASE 2011 | In this case, the Supreme Court decided that exam answer sheets came under the RTI Act's definition of "information." This choice gave students and candidates access to their answer papers that had been reviewed. |

4. **RAJASTHAN HIGH COURT BAR ASSOCIATION CASE 2018**

The Court ruled that excessive disclosure under the RTI Act should not jeopardize the independence of the judiciary.

CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS ACT:

- **High number of pending cases:** Nearly 3.15 lakh complaints or appeals are currently pending with 26 information commissions in India.
 - Maharashtra had the most active cases, with Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, and other states following.
- **INFORMATION COMMISSION:** Four of the country's 29 information commissioners are currently headless, two of them are completely inactive, and only 5% of the posts are held by women.
 - Tripura and Jharkhand have been totally inactive for 15 and 29 months, respectively. Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal, and Manipur are the only states without chiefs.
- **Slow disposal of cases:** Concerns about the late disposal rates in certain commissions and the opaqueness of their operations are also raised.
- **Various exemptions:** Section 8 of the act and Official Secret Act 1923 restricts access to information under various grounds like security and strategic concerns of the nation.
 - According to the "Right to Information: Master Key to Good Governance" report by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission, "The Official Secrets Act, 1923 should be repealed."
- **Digital divide:** Information access is frequently made simpler for people who have internet access and digital skills due to the "digital divide." Online RTI requests may be challenging for rural and marginalized groups.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Awareness campaign:** Launch extensive awareness and education initiatives to inform the public of their rights under the RTI Act.
- **Capacity Development:** Public information officers (PIOs) and appellate authorities should receive frequent training and capacity-building programs to increase their responsiveness.
- **Protection for whistle-blowers:** Enhance whistleblower and RTI activist protections to ensure their safety and promote the disclosure of wrongdoing.
- **Technology Use:** Encourage the use of technology, such as digital archiving and document management systems, to help with effective information storage and retrieval.
 - To digitize and streamline government operations, and implement e-governance projects like Digital India, PRAGATI, National e-governance plan.
- **Making Information Commissions Stronger:** Ensure that the central and state information commissions have enough personnel and funding.
 - Take action to shorten the case backlog and hasten the determination of appeals and complaints.
- **Learn from best practices around the world:** USA's law is a good example. Anyone has the right to request access to Executive Branch government records under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in the USA. Unless they fall under one or more of the FOIA's exempt categories of information, the requested records must be made public.

WHAT DRIVES THE PROCESS OF ATLANTIFICATION IN ARCTIC SEAS?

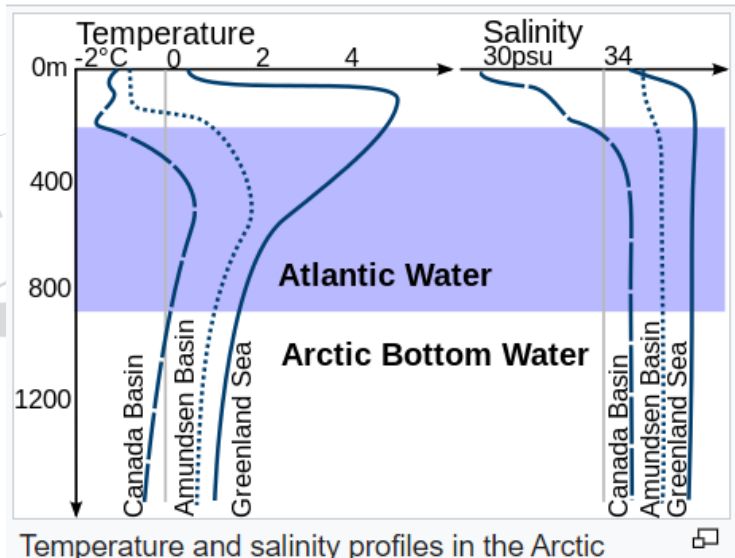
SOURCE: THE HINDU

WHY IN NEWS?

- The amount that warming Atlantic seas are encroaching on Arctic Sea ice has been revealed by satellite data, according to scientists at the European Space Agency (ESA). As they put it, they made their announcement "with alarm bells ringing about the rapid demise of sea ice in the Arctic."
- Scientists studying sea ice refer to this phenomenon as Atlantification.

WHAT IS ATLANTIFICATION?

- The term "Atlantification" describes a **phenomenon where the features of the Atlantic Ocean, such as its water temperature, salinity, and ecosystem, are encroaching on other areas, frequently as a result of climate change.**
- The Arctic Ocean and the surrounding area are frequently mentioned when this phrase is used.
- The Arctic Ocean is known for its cold, comparatively fresh water, and unique ecosystem that has evolved to withstand these circumstances.
- The Arctic is warming more quickly than many other locations, though, as a result of climate change, which is causing global temperatures to rise.



WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THE ATLANTIFICATION OF THE ARCTIC SEA?

- **Warm ocean currents:** These currents have the potential to spread their effect into nearby seas and oceans, warming the water and changing the environment there.
 - The Gulf Stream and the North Atlantic Current, which carry warm water from lower latitudes to higher latitudes, are two examples of the warm currents that make up the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Ocean circulation patterns:** Ocean currents are broad-scale patterns of circulation that affect how water masses travel within oceans. Changes in one place can have an impact on nearby areas because of how interrelated these currents are.
 - Modifications to the circulation of the North Atlantic can have an impact on the North Sea and the Arctic Ocean, causing warming and Atlantification.
- **Climate change:** Climate change is a substantial contributor to Atlantification. Oceans, notably the Atlantic Ocean, are warming as a result of rising global temperatures.
- **Altered ecosystems:** The distribution and number of species, including plankton, fish, and marine animals, can be impacted by warming waters and variations in the availability of nutrients.
 - This has an impact on the entire food chain and may have negative effects on native communities that depend on these resources.

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROCESS:

- **Loss of ice:** The continuous retreat of sea ice is a result of both Arctic warming and the arrival of Atlantic water.
 - Sea ice species that depend on it for breeding and hunting, such as polar bears and seals, are at risk as a result of reduced sea ice extent and thickness.
- **Ocean acidification:** The inflow of Atlantic water has the potential to alter the chemistry of the ocean, including increasing its acidity.
 - Marine life can be negatively impacted by ocean acidification, especially species with calcium carbonate skeletons or shells, such as some types of plankton and shellfish.
- **Altered climate patterns:** Changed Climate Patterns: The Arctic can have an impact on the world's climate.
 - The polar jet stream can be disturbed by melting sea ice and warming Arctic waters, which could result in more severe weather conditions elsewhere in the world.
- **Feedback Loops:** As a result of Atlantification, warming and other environmental changes in the Arctic may be amplified.
 - For instance, as sea ice melts and reveals darker ocean water, the latter absorbs more sunlight, causing warming to proceed more quickly, decreasing the albedo of the region.
- **Geopolitical tensions:** As governments compete for access to recently opened maritime routes, natural riches, and strategic benefits, the changing Arctic climate has intensified geopolitical tensions.
 - Faster melting of ice has also caused the submergence of various small island nations like Pacific islands.
- **Infrastructure and transportation:** With less ice covering the Arctic, shipping, and resource exploitation are becoming more and more popular.
 - Concerns are raised concerning the possibility of oil spills, harm to delicate ecosystems, the requirement for suitable infrastructure, and the necessity for emergency response capabilities.

HOW TO DEAL WITH THIS CHALLENGE?

- **Marine conservation:** Protect Arctic maritime ecosystems by enforcing stringent laws and protection measures.
 - Creating marine protected areas (MPAs) is one way to protect important habitats and guarantee sustainable fisheries management.
- **International cooperation:** Since the Arctic is a global area, collaboration amongst Arctic countries is crucial.
 - These include contracts for resource management, shipping laws, and environmental safeguards. In order to make such cooperation possible, the Arctic Council is essential.
 - The United Nations Convention on the Law of Seas governs the rights and responsibilities of nations in the ocean waters.
- **Mitigation of climate change:** Global warming is the fundamental cause of Atlantification. It's crucial to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to solve this issue through policies and activities that aim to switch to renewable energy sources and boost energy efficiency.
 - UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol and Mission LiFE are some examples of such initiatives.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Sustainable resource management:** Promote the sustainable management of Arctic resources, such as fisheries and mineral deposits, to reduce negative environmental effects.

- **Scientific Study:** To learn more about the dynamics of Atlantification and its effects on the environment, scientific study and monitoring should be continued in the Arctic.
 - IPCC and World Meteorological Organisation deal with making policy decisions and scientific analysis of climate change.
- **Long-Term Planning:** Create plans and strategies for the future that take into consideration the changing environment in the Arctic.
 - **SDG14:** In particular, SDG 14 is concerned with "Life Below Water" and seeks to address a number of issues pertaining to the world's oceans, seas, and marine resources.

