

Simultaneous polls feasible: EC

O.P. Rawat

Favouring simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly polls, the Election Commission on Sunday said all political parties need to be brought on board before such an exercise was carried out.

“The Election Commission has always been of the view that simultaneous elections will give enough time to the incumbent government to formulate policies and implement programmes continuously for a longer time without interruptions caused by the imposition of the model code of conduct,” Election Commissioner O.P. Rawat said.

He said the step would be possible only when necessary changes were carried out in the Constitution and the Representation of the People Act.

Existing legal and constitutional provisions mandate that elections are to be held within six months ahead of the end of the term of an Assembly or the Lok Sabha.

“The Commission may conduct such elections after six months [after constitutional and legal changes are made],” he said. The Assembly elections for Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha are due in mid-2019, along with the next general polls.

Mr. Rawat said the Election Commission was in 2015 asked to give its view on the synchronised polls. “The Commission gave its views on the matter in March that year. It had suggested a few steps that need to be taken before such elections are made feasible.”

Mr. Rawat said it would be logistically possible to hold the elections together if sufficient time was given to the Commission. Besides, it needs 24 lakh each Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) Machines.

“We need two sets of EVMs — one for the Lok Sabha and another for the Assembly polls,” he said.

‘Orders placed for EVMs’

Mr. Rawat said orders had already been placed for more number of EVMs and VVPAT machines and new inventory had started coming in. “The Commission would be able to get the required number of EVMs and VVPAT machines by mid 2019 or before if need be.”

Mr. Rawat’s assertion assumes significance as Prime Minister Narendra Modi had already pitched for simultaneous polls.

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