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PM bats for 'One Nation, One Election'

ANAND MISHRA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Making a fresh pitch for 'One Nation, One Election', Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said that efforts should be made to ensure that single voters' list is used for all elections in Lok Sabha, Assembly and Panchayat.

Addressing the concluding session of the 80th All India Presiding Officers Conference in Kevadia in Gujarat via video conference, Modi said, "One Nation, One Election' is not simply a subject of discussion, it is rather the need of India. Every few months, some big election takes place in some part of the country and you are aware of its impact on developmental activities. In such a scenario, there is a need for deep study and deliberation on the issue."

He said there should be single voter list for all elections. "Today there is a separate list for each of these. Why are we wasting our time and money? Now the voting age for each of these elections is 18 years. Earlier, there was some difference in the age eligibility

for each of them. Hence they happened separately. Now there is no such need," he said.

While Modi has been pursuing the 'One Nation, One Election' idea since he first became prime minister in 2014, it has been criticised by many. Former Vice President Hamid Ansari had in 2018 strongly disapproved of the idea of holding polls together, calling it an "assault" on Indian democracy. Later also the pitch had not found favour with several political parties, who skipped an all-party meeting called in 2019. Yet the government decided to set up a committee to give suggestions on the proposal and its implementation.

The BJP under Modi has grown in size and influence since 2014.

Recent election trends have shown that while BJP led by Modi easily won the Lok Sabha polls, the trends for Assembly elections held in the corresponding period were not equally strong for the saffron party. However, the BJP leaders have been arguing that 'One Nation, One Election' has a larger national interest in mind than merely winning an election.