

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Edition: International | Table of Contents

Page 03 Syllabus : Prelims Fact	Physicist, IISc ex-professor Rohini Godbole passes away
Page 05 Syllabus : Prelims Fact	ISRO-DBT sign agreement to conduct biotechnology experiments in space station
Page 11 Syllabus : Prelims Fact	India's coking coal imports surged to a six-year high in the first half of 2024-25
Page 13 Syllabus : GS 2 : International Relations, GS 3 – Environment	Severe budget crisis sparks concerns over future of UN-led climate dialogue
In News	Pink Cocaine
Page 06 : Editorial Analysis: Syllabus : GS 2 : Indian Polity	Sharpen the anti-defection law, strengthen democracy

—It's about quality—

Padma Shri recipient and pioneer of particle physics in India, Professor Rohini Godbole, passed away in Pune.

Physicist, IISc ex-professor Rohini Godbole passes away

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

Padma Shri recipient and pioneer of particle physics in India, Professor Rohini Godbole, passed away in Pune on Friday.

In a condolence note, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) said: "With great sadness, we deeply mourn the passing of Prof. Rohini Godbole. She passed away peacefully early this morning in her sleep. In addition to being a great scientist, she was a great leader, guide, colleague, and friend. She was a champion of women in science." She joined the IISc in 1995 and retired as professor in 2018.



Rohini Godbole

She won many accolades and awards, including the Padma Shri, Ordre national du Mérite from France, among others.

She did her M.Sc in IIT-Bombay and received the silver medal. She completed her Ph.D. from the State University of New York, Stony Brook, in 1979. She was a visiting professor at

various institutes and universities around the world.

"After serving on the faculty of the University of Bombay, she joined the IISc in November 1995. She retired as a full professor from the institute in July 2018 but continued her research activities at the Centre for High Energy Physics (CHEP) till date," the IISc said.

"While she has ventured into various sub-branches of the field, the main focus of her research remained collider physics, in particular top and Higgs physics. She was a champion for future colliders, in particular the ILC and its variants," the institute said.

Analysis of the News

- In a condolence note, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) said: "With great sadness, we deeply mourn the passing of Prof. Rohini Godbole. She passed away peacefully early this morning in her sleep."

- In addition to being a great scientist, she was a great leader, guide, colleague, and friend. She was a champion of women in science." She joined the IISc in 1995 and retired as professor in 2018.
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- She did her M.Sc in IIT-Bombay and received the silver medal. She completed her Ph.D. from the State University of New York, Stony Brook, in 1979. She was a visiting professor at various institutes and universities around the world.
- "After serving on the faculty of the University of Bombay, she joined the IISc in November 1995. She retired as a full professor from the institute in July 2018 but continued her research activities at the Centre for High Energy Physics (CHoEP) till date," the IISc said.

ISRO and the DBT are collaborating to conduct experiments for India's upcoming Bharatiya Antariksh Station, focusing on health impacts and bio-manufacturing innovations.

- ▶ This partnership aligns with the BIOE3 policy aimed at enhancing India's bio-economy, projected to reach \$300 billion by 2030.

ISRO-DBT sign agreement to conduct biotechnology experiments in space station

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) have inked an agreement to design and conduct experiments, which will then be integrated into the forthcoming Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), India's proposed indigenous space station.

The BAS is expected to take shape from 2028-2035.

Health impact

Some of the experiments being mooted include how weightlessness can influence muscle loss on those in space, what kind of algae may be suitable as nutrients or to preserve food for longer, how some algae may be processed to make jet fuel, and the impact of radiation on the health of those aboard space stations.

Before the BAS, the ma-



S. Somanath

rior mission on ISRO's plate is the Gaganyaan mission, which will be India's first crewed mission to space that is expected to launch in 2025-2026.

Prior to that there will be three uncrewed test missions. Some of the biology missions could be included in these test missions.

"In some of the test flights (uncrewed) prior to the main Gaganyaan mission, we may consider including some of these experiments. Which ones specifically, we are yet to decide," S. Somanath,

Chairman, ISRO, told *The Hindu*. "Based on what we learn, we could consider some experiments in Gaganyaan. However, the primary plan is for the BAS."

Bio-manufacturing

The ISRO-DBT collaboration stems from another initiative this year called the BIOE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) policy by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) that aims to stimulate 'bio-manufacturing' in India. The bio-economy, officials in the DBT said, would be worth \$300 billion by 2030.

"The space bio-manufacturing sector is part of this. This agreement will spur innovation and developments in human health research, novel pharmaceuticals, biotherapeutics, regenerative medicine, bio-based technologies for waste management as well as support multiple start-ups," said Rajesh Gokhale, Secretary, DBT.

ISRO-DBT Collaboration for Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS)

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) signed an agreement to design and conduct experiments for integration into the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), an indigenous space station planned for 2028–2035.

Proposed Experiments

- Potential studies include examining muscle loss due to weightlessness, algae suitability for nutrition and food preservation, algae-based jet fuel, and radiation's health impacts on crew members.

Gaganyaan Mission Preparations

- Gaganyaan, India's first crewed space mission slated for 2025–2026, will be preceded by three uncrewed test missions.
- Selected biological experiments may be conducted on these test flights to gather preliminary data.

BIOE3 Policy and Bio-Manufacturing

- The ISRO-DBT partnership supports the DBT's BIOE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) policy to boost India's bio-manufacturing sector, anticipated to reach a \$300 billion value by 2030.
- Focus areas include innovations in human health, novel pharmaceuticals, regenerative medicine, waste management, and bio-based technology, also encouraging start-ups in the bio-economy sector.

India's coking coal imports surged to a six-year high due to rising steel production, with significant increases from Russia.

- ▶ Indian mills have shifted focus from Australia, taking advantage of more cost-effective Russian shipments.

India's coking coal imports surged to a six-year high in the first half of 2024-25

Abhishek Law

NEW DELHI

India's coking coal imports for the first six months of the current fiscal (April - September) were at a six-year-high at 29.6 million tonne (mt) with shipments from Russia witnessing a substantial rise of over 200% during this period.

Shipments increased by around 3% on a y-o-y basis, against 28.8 mt in the comparative period last year.

Current coking coal imports are higher than the H1 FY20 levels of 29.3 mt; while it had dropped to 21.1 mt in H1 FY21. However, it



has been rising steadily since H1 of FY22 when it stood at 27.7 mt, and then to 28.8 mt in H1 FY23; as per data from market intelligence firm, BigMint.

"Rising coking coal imports have coincided with

higher steel production in India," a market participant told *businessline*.

Incidentally, Indian mills continued to take advantage of discounted supplies of coking coal from Russia. However, they have reduced sourcing from Australia. India is the second-largest producer of crude steel and the largest coking coal importer.

Russian coking coal shipments, also at a six-year high – saw a near 40% jump in H1 FY25 to 4 mt, as against 2.9 mt in the first half of last year.

(The writer is with *The Hindu businessline*)

Analysis of the news:

- ▶ India's coking coal imports for April–September FY25 reached a six-year high of 29.6 million tonnes (mt), up 3% from 28.8 mt year-on-year.
- ▶ Russia's coking coal shipments to India surged over 200%, with a 40% increase in H1 FY25 to 4 mt, compared to 2.9 mt in the previous year.
- ▶ Indian mills benefited from Russia's discounted coal, reducing reliance on Australian imports.
- ▶ Higher imports are linked to India's increased steel production.
- ▶ Presently India is the world's second-largest crude steel producer and the largest coking coal importer.

The UNFCCC, the UN's leading climate change body, faces a severe budget deficit of over 57 million euros in 2024, impacting its ability to support global climate negotiations

- ➔ Delayed payments from key countries, including the U.S. and China, worsen the situation, hindering essential climate actions and initiatives.
- ➔ This budget gap has already forced cancellations and cutbacks in UNFCCC operations.

Severe budget crisis sparks concerns over future of UN-led climate dialogue

The UN body is facing budget shortfall of at least €57 million, threatening its ability to conduct climate negotiations and implement agreements, despite some countries exceeding their payment obligations, major contributors have not yet fulfilled their commitments, exacerbating the crisis

Reuters
BRUSSELS

The leading UN body on climate change is experiencing a severe budget shortfall, according to an analysis of documents from the world body. This funding gap, diplomats said, could impair international climate dialogue.

The analysis found a budget hole of at least 57 million euros for 2024 – or nearly half of the funding needed for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat to run annual climate negotiations among almost 200 countries and to help implement any agreements that are made.

The budgets set out for the UNFCCC span two years. Its total 2024-25 budget – the body's three main budget lines combined – is 240 million euros, with about half of that expected to be allocated for this year.

The UNFCCC's member countries signed off on the budget and are expected to contribute the funds. The budget includes a core fund to which these countries are obligated to contribute, a supplementary fund drawing voluntary donations, and another voluntary fund to help diplomats attend UN climate negotiations. While countries such as Japan and Germany have exceeded their payment obligations,



UNFCCC confirmed that there is a shortfall in the fund meant to pay for hundreds of diplomats to attend climate talks, including its COP-29 summit next month in Baku, Azerbaijan. REUTERS

others, notably the U.S. and China have not yet met theirs. Contributions are due on January 1 each year. The secretariat, set up under the 1992 UNFCCC treaty, is the world's key body for coordinating international efforts to reduce climate-warming emissions and staging summits where countries can hold one another accountable.

The budget shortfall has forced it to curtail activities – from reducing operating hours at its headquarters in Bonn, Germany, to cancelling regional “climate week” events this year. Those regional summits in countries such as Kenya and Malaysia last year raised billions of dollars in investment pledges from governments, investors and philanthropies for renewable energy, reforestation and other climate-focused projects.

“We continue to work

relentlessly, but our resources are increasingly over-stretched,” said a UNFCCC spokesperson. Germany's climate envoy Jennifer Morgan urged countries to find a solution. “We need a climate secretariat that can perform its functions,” she said.

Record payment delays
As of this month, the UNFCCC had received 63 million euros (\$68 million) in contributions for 2024.

Officials in the U.S. and China said the countries would make their payments this year but did not specify when. State Department spokesperson Melvin Felix said the U.S. “still intends to provide a substantial contribution” this year. The Chinese Foreign Ministry said China “will fulfil its obligations as always.” As of October, the

U.S. still owed 7.3 million euros to the UNFCCC's 2024 core budget, though it has contributed 2.5 million euros to its supplementary budget. China still owed 5.6 million euros to the core budget, though it has contributed 497,000 euros to the supplementary fund.

Even if both countries meet their obligations this year, it would not be enough to cover the hole in the UNFCCC's overall budget. Countries can be delayed in meeting the payment deadline for logistical reasons. National elections also can cause delays.

The analysis showed that, in past years, these issues typically were resolved before October and that this year's delays are by far the worst in UNFCCC history. Eight diplomats involved in U.N. climate negotiations, and with UNFCCC representatives expressed concern that the funding gap could undermine UN climate negotiations at a time when national governments are seeking trillions of dollars in climate investments.

The diplomats listed examples, not previously reported, of how the cash crunch was already affecting UNFCCC operations, such as forcing the secretariat to extend employment contracts for only months at a time or hampering its ability to fund the travel of representatives from poor nations to climate talks.

“The UNFCCC confirmed exclusively that there is a 2.04 million euros shortfall in the fund meant to pay for hundreds of diplomats to attend climate talks, including its COP-29 summit next month in Baku, Azerbaijan. Egypt's lead climate negotiator Mohamed Nasr said that any weakening of the work done by the UNFCCC by failing to fund its budget would mean “creating space for weakening climate change action globally.”

“This process is not only about negotiating the decisions but also about the global pressure being put on the leaders to deliver,” Mr. Nasr said. As countries have voted over the years to approve more climate negotiations and events for the UNFCCC to run, they have steadily increased the UNFCCC's

budget needs while resisting increases in their own funding obligations. As a result, the UNFCCC has come to rely increasingly on voluntary donations.

The split budget – combining obligatory and voluntary contributions by nations – allows some countries to channel UNFCCC payments through different government Ministries or approval processes. Countries paying into the supplementary budget also can specify how they would like the money to be spent, though these requests are not made public and are not always binding.

One diplomat said the UNFCCC could strengthen its case for a bigger core budget by being more frugal. Others noted that the body has not yet fully implemented recommendations made by UN auditors covering areas such as staff selection and employee benefits.

Asked about criticisms, the UNFCCC spokesperson said the fact that nations are asking the body to do more work represents a “vote of confidence.” “However, when funding is not increased to match, and many existing funding pledges are not fulfilled on time, this itself causes major inefficiencies, as more time needs to be spent on stretching and re-allocating existing resources at a time when many staff are already working literally around the clock,” the spokesperson said.

Severe Budget Shortfall for UNFCCC

- ➔ The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) faces a budget shortfall of over 57 million euros for 2024.

- This shortfall represents almost half of the funding needed for annual climate negotiations and implementing global climate agreements.
- The UNFCCC's total budget for 2024-25 stands at 240 million euros, with half expected for 2024 operations.

Budget Composition and Funding Sources

- The UNFCCC budget comprises three main funds: a core fund with obligatory contributions, a supplementary voluntary fund, and an additional fund supporting delegates from poorer nations.
- Countries like Japan and Germany have met their funding commitments, while others, notably the U.S. and China, have yet to fulfil their obligations for 2024.
- As of October 2024, the U.S. owes 7.3 million euros to the core budget, while China owes 5.6 million euros.

Impact on UNFCCC Operations

- Budget constraints have led to reduced operating hours at the UNFCCC's headquarters in Bonn, Germany, and cancelled regional "climate week" events, previously held in countries like Kenya and Malaysia.
- Diplomatic sources report additional impacts on staffing, with contract extensions limited to months at a time and reduced travel support for representatives from poorer countries to attend climate talks.

Record Delays in Contributions

- The 2024 budget has seen record delays in member contributions, often exacerbated by national elections or bureaucratic processes.
- As of now, the UNFCCC has received only 63 million euros for 2024, the slowest payment rate in its history.

Concerns Over Global Climate Action

- UNFCCC warns that financial shortfalls could hinder international climate discussions and reduce pressure on leaders to advance climate action.
- Some argue that UNFCCC's reliance on voluntary contributions limits its financial stability, while others suggest it could improve efficiency and transparency in operations.

More About UNFCCC

- **Establishment:** The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international treaty signed in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.
- **Objective:** Its primary goal is to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations to prevent dangerous human-induced interference with the climate system.
- **Framework:** The UNFCCC provides a platform for nearly 198 member countries to negotiate and develop legally binding climate agreements, like the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the Paris Agreement (2015).
- **Annual Meetings:** It organises annual COP (Conference of Parties) meetings, where nations assess progress and set future climate goals.
- **Secretariat:** Headquartered in Bonn, Germany, the UNFCCC secretariat oversees day-to-day operations, manages climate funding, and supports developing nations.

In News : Pink Cocaine

- According to the Drug Enforcement Administration and epidemiologists "pink cocaine," has become a dangerous and increasingly popular part of the club scene in U.S. cities.



About Pink Cocaine:

- The pink cocaine generally does not contain any cocaine.
- **Composition:** Common ingredients found in pink cocaine include methamphetamine, ketamine (a dissociative anaesthetic known for its hallucinogenic effects), MDMA (ecstasy), benzodiazepines, crack, and caffeine.
- It gets its pink hue from food colouring typically including at least one stimulant and one depressant.
- This drug cocktail is also known by street names such as tusi, tuci, cocaina rosada, tucibi, pink powder etc.
- **Health effects:** It can cause hallucinations and can impact breathing and heart attacks, high blood pressure, a heightened risk of stroke, behavioural changes, addiction, anxiety, depression, and even psychosis.
- It contains unpredictable contents that pose significant risks to users, and experts warn that some batches may be contaminated with fentanyl, a potent opioid fueling the surge in overdose deaths.

Sharpen the anti-defection law, strengthen democracy

The anti-defection law in India, a crucial instrument designed to maintain the stability of governments and uphold the integrity of democratic institutions, has been a subject of much debate since its inception. Introduced in 1985, the law sought to address the rampant party-switching by legislators, which frequently led to political instability. While it has been somewhat effective in curbing the practice of defection, various loopholes and implementation issues have surfaced over time, necessitating further reforms.

Historical genesis of the law

The problem of defection has deep roots in Indian politics, dating back to the post-Independence era. In the first few decades following Independence, India experienced a significant number of defections, which often resulted in the destabilisation of governments. This trend not only undermined the mandate of the electorate but also raised serious ethical questions about the conduct of elected representatives.

Legislators would switch parties, sometimes in exchange for financial gains or ministerial positions, leading to the fall of governments and the formation of new ones without fresh elections. This was colloquially referred to as “*Aaya Ram, Gaya Ram*”, a phrase that originated from an incident in Haryana in the 1960s, where a legislator, Gaya Lal, switched parties multiple times in a single day. Such incidents underscored the need for a law to curb this practice.

Indian Parliament enacted the anti-defection law through the 52nd Amendment to the Constitution, introducing the Tenth Schedule during Rajiv Gandhi’s tenure as Prime Minister. This law laid down the grounds for disqualification of Members of Parliament and State legislatures on the basis of defection. A member could be disqualified if they voluntarily gave up the membership of their political party or disobeyed the party whip in key votes such as confidence motions or Budget approvals. The law was aimed at providing stability to governments and ensuring that elected representatives remained loyal to the party’s mandate on which they were elected.

While the initial law provided some deterrence against defections, it still had loopholes. One significant flaw was the provision that allowed a split in a party if at least one-third of the members defected, which often led to mass defections. The 91st Amendment in 2003 addressed this issue by requiring that at least



B. Vinod Kumar

was a Member of Parliament (Bharat Rashtra Samithi) in the 14th and the 16th Lok Sabha

The anti-defection law has played a crucial role in political stability, but there are gaps which need to be addressed to make it more effective and impartial

two-thirds of the members of a party must agree for a “merger” to avoid disqualification. This made it more challenging for small-scale defections to occur and reduced the incidence of such political manoeuvring.

Despite its intentions, the anti-defection law has faced criticism and challenges in its implementation. One of the most significant challenges is the inordinate delay in deciding defection cases. In some instances, Speakers have taken several months, or even years, to render a decision. This delay allows defectors to continue holding their positions, thereby subverting the purpose of the law. The discretionary power vested in the Speaker or Chairperson, without any stipulated time frame for decision-making, has often been a point of contention.

Another issue is the lack of transparency in the issuance and communication of party whips. Whips are essential instruments used by political parties to ensure discipline among their members, especially on crucial votes. However, the internal nature of these directives has led to disputes over whether members were adequately informed about the party’s stance, making it difficult to determine the legitimacy of defection cases. While the decisions of the Speaker or Chairperson are subject to judicial review, the courts have generally been reluctant to intervene in defection cases, citing the need to respect the autonomy of the legislature. This has limited the scope for addressing potential abuses of power or ensuring timely resolutions.

Proposed amendments

To strengthen the anti-defection law and enhance its impartiality, two key amendments are proposed. The first concerns the time frame for decisions on defection cases. The absence of a fixed timeline for the Speaker or Chairperson to decide on defection cases has resulted in delays and potential misuse of discretionary power, undermining the law’s intent. To address this issue, a four-week time frame should be established for resolving defection cases. If a decision is not reached within this period, the defecting members should be deemed to be disqualified from their positions. This amendment to the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution would ensure timely resolutions, prevent arbitrary decisions, and uphold the legislative process’s integrity by limiting political bias and misuse of power.

The second is on public notice of party whips. The current lack of transparency in issuing party whips often leads to disputes over whether

members were adequately informed. To resolve this, political parties should be provided with a framework of the service of the whip in the form of a newspaper publication or through electronic communication. In *Keisham Meghachandra Singh vs The Hon’ble Speaker Manipur Legislative Assembly and Ors.* (2020), the Supreme Court of India recommended replacing the Speaker’s role in anti-defection cases with an independent tribunal or a body appointed by the Election Commission of India. However, in a democracy, the importance of the Speaker or Chairperson’s office cannot be underestimated, as they are crucial in upholding parliamentary integrity and ensuring impartiality. Instead of sidelining this institution, reforms should aim to strengthen its accountability and transparency.

The Government of India must also explore various suggestions made by the Dinesh Goswami committee report (1990), the Hashim Abdul Halim committee report (1994), the 170th report of the Law Commission of India (1999), the Report of the National Commission to review the working of the Constitution of India (2002), the Hashim Abdul Halim committee report (2003) and the 255th report of the Law Commission of India (2015) for strengthening of the anti-defection law.

Need for political will

The anti-defection law has, historically, played a crucial role in preventing instability caused by defections and maintaining the sanctity of the electoral mandate. However, its implementation has revealed certain gaps and challenges that need to be addressed to make the law more effective and impartial. The amendments to the Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution should be prioritised to facilitate the effective implementation of the Union Government’s “One Nation, One Election” initiative. By implementing these amendments, the anti-defection law can be revitalised to better serve its purpose in the current political context. It would ensure that elected representatives adhere to the principles of party loyalty and discipline while also protecting the democratic mandate of the electorate. Narendra Modi, the Leader of the House in the Lok Sabha, and Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition, should take up the issue and ensure that the amendments are made to strengthen Indian democracy. In doing so, the law would continue to uphold the stability and the integrity of India’s parliamentary democracy, adapting to the evolving political landscape with greater efficacy and fairness.

GS Paper 02 : Indian Polity

UPSC Mains Practice Question : Discuss the effectiveness of the anti-defection law in maintaining political stability in India. Highlight the challenges in its implementation and suggest reforms to strengthen its impartiality and efficiency..
(250 Words /15 marks)

Context :

- The anti-defection law in India, introduced in 1985, aims to stabilise governments by restricting legislators from defecting to other parties.
- While effective to some extent, the law faces criticism due to delays and discretionary power in decision-making. Proposed reforms suggest setting time limits and enhancing transparency in defection cases.

Introduction

- The anti-defection law in India, a crucial instrument designed to maintain the stability of governments and uphold the integrity of democratic institutions, has been a subject of much debate since its inception.
- Introduced in 1985, the law sought to address the rampant party-switching by legislators, which frequently led to political instability.
- While it has been somewhat effective in curbing the practice of defection, various loopholes and implementation issues have surfaced over time, necessitating further reforms.

Historical genesis of the law

- **Historical trends:** The problem of defection has deep roots in Indian politics, dating back to the post-Independence era.
 - In the first few decades following Independence, India experienced a significant number of defections, which often resulted in the destabilisation of governments.
 - This trend not only undermined the mandate of the electorate but also raised serious ethical questions about the conduct of elected representatives.
- **Nature of Defections:** Legislators would switch parties, sometimes in exchange for financial gains or ministerial positions, leading to the fall of governments and the formation of new ones without fresh elections.
- This was colloquially referred to as "Aaya Ram, Gaya Ram", a phrase that originated from an incident in Haryana in the 1960s, where a legislator, Gaya Lal, switched parties multiple times in a single day.

- Such incidents underscored the need for a law to curb this practice.

What was the Indian legislative response to defections?

- Indian Parliament enacted the anti-defection law through the 52nd Amendment to the Constitution, introducing the Tenth Schedule during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure as Prime Minister.
- This law laid down the grounds for disqualification of Members of Parliament and State legislatures on the basis of defection.
- A member could be disqualified if they voluntarily gave up the membership of their political party or disobeyed the party whip in key votes such as confidence motions or Budget approvals.
- The law was aimed at providing stability to governments and ensuring that elected representatives remained loyal to the party's mandate on which they were elected.

What were the loopholes in the Anti-Defection Law?

- While the initial law provided some deterrence against defections, it still had loopholes.
- **One significant flaw:** was the provision that allowed a split in a party if at least one-third of the members defected, which often led to mass defections.
 - The 91st Amendment in 2003 addressed this issue by requiring that at least two-thirds of the members of a party must agree for a "merger" to avoid disqualification.
 - This made it more challenging for small-scale defections to occur and reduced the incidence of such political manoeuvring.

What were the implementation challenges in the law?

- Despite its intentions, the anti-defection law has faced criticism and challenges in its implementation.
- The inordinate delay in deciding defection cases. In some instances, Speakers have taken several months, or even years, to render a decision.
- This delay allows defectors to continue holding their positions, thereby subverting the purpose of the law.
- The discretionary power vested in the Speaker or Chairperson, without any stipulated time frame for decision-making, has often been a point of contention.
- **The lack of transparency:** in the issuance and communication of party whips.
 - Whips are essential instruments used by political parties to ensure discipline among their members, especially on crucial votes.
 - The internal nature of these directives has led to disputes over whether members were adequately informed about the party's stance, making it difficult to determine the legitimacy of defection cases.
 - While the decisions of the Speaker or Chairperson are subject to judicial review, the courts have generally been reluctant to intervene in defection cases, citing the need to respect the autonomy of the legislature.

- This has limited the scope for addressing potential abuses of power or ensuring timely resolutions.

Proposed amendments

- To strengthen the anti-defection law and enhance its impartiality, two key amendments are proposed.
- **The first concerns the time frame for decisions on defection cases:** The absence of a fixed timeline for the Speaker or Chairperson to decide on defection cases has resulted in delays and potential misuse of discretionary power, undermining the law's intent.
- **Solutions:** a four-week time frame should be established for resolving defection cases.
 - If a decision is not reached within this period, the defecting members should be deemed to be disqualified from their positions.
 - This amendment to the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution would ensure timely resolutions, prevent arbitrary decisions, and uphold the legislative process's integrity by limiting political bias and misuse of power.
 - The second is on public notice of party whips: The current lack of transparency in issuing party whips often leads to disputes over whether members were adequately informed.
- **Solution:** political parties should be provided with a framework of the service of the whip in the form of a newspaper publication or through electronic communication.
 - **Judicial Insight:** In *Keisham Meghachandra Singh vs The Hon'ble Speaker Manipur Legislative Assembly and Ors.* (2020), the Supreme Court of India recommended replacing the Speaker's role in anti-defection cases with an independent tribunal or a body appointed by the Election Commission of India.
 - In a democracy, the importance of the Speaker or Chairperson's office cannot be underestimated, as they are crucial in upholding parliamentary integrity and ensuring impartiality.
 - Instead of side-lining this institution, reforms should aim to strengthen its accountability and transparency.
- **Recommendations for Further Exploration:** The Government of India must also explore various suggestions made by
 - the Dinesh Goswami committee report (1990),
 - the Hashim Abdul Halim committee report (1994),
 - the 170th report of the Law Commission of India (1999),
 - the Report of the National Commission to review the working of the Constitution of India (2002),
 - the Hashim Abdul Halim committee report (2003) and
 - the 255th report of the Law Commission of India (2015) for strengthening of the anti-defection law.

Way forward: Need for political will

- **Importance of the Anti-Defection Law:** However, its implementation has revealed certain gaps and challenges that need to be addressed to make the law more effective and impartial.
- **Need for Amendments:** The amendments to the Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution should be prioritised to facilitate the effective implementation of the Union Government's "One Nation, One Election" initiative.
 - By implementing these amendments, the anti-defection law can be revitalised to better serve its purpose in the current political context.
 - It would ensure that elected representatives adhere to the principles of party loyalty and discipline while also protecting the democratic mandate of the electorate.

Conclusion

- PM, the Leader of the House in the Lok Sabha, and Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition, should take up the issue and ensure that the amendments are made to strengthen Indian democracy.
- In doing so, the law would continue to uphold the stability and the integrity of India's parliamentary democracy, adapting to the evolving political landscape with greater efficacy and fairness.

Anti-Defection Law

- **Introduction** The anti-defection law is part of the Indian Constitution's Tenth Schedule, introduced through the 52nd Amendment Act of 1985. It aims to prevent elected representatives from defecting to other political parties, thus maintaining government stability.

Objective

- Designed to curb political instability caused by frequent party-switching. Responded to the toppling of multiple state governments in the 1960s and 1970s.
- **Provisions of the Law Disqualification of MPs/MLAs:**
 - Members can be disqualified if they defect by leaving their party or joining another party.
- **Merger Exception:**
 - Initially, a defection of one-third of party members was considered a valid "merger." The 91st Amendment Act of 2003 increased this threshold to two-thirds.
- **Scope of Disqualification :**
 - Members who voluntarily give up party membership.
 - Members who vote against party directives without prior permission.
 - Independent Members joining a political party after the election.
 - Nominated Members joining a political party six months after nomination.

Authority on Disqualification

- The Speaker or Chairman of the respective House decides on disqualification cases.
- These decisions are subject to judicial review, although the law does not specify a timeframe for resolving cases.