

Editorial of the Day – 28.04.2026

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1. Gang of seven – On the AAP defections (TH)

GS Paper II – Indian Polity and Governance.

Topic – Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Sub-Topic – The Tenth Schedule (Anti-Defection Law).

1. Introduction

In April 2026, the Indian parliamentary landscape witnessed a significant shift as seven out of ten Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rajya Sabha MPs declared a merger with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The acceptance of this merger by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha has ignited a fierce constitutional debate. While the move provided the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with a decisive majority in the Upper House, it has simultaneously exposed the structural vulnerabilities of the Anti-Defection Law and raised fundamental questions about the sanctity of the voter mandate.

2. Numerical Impact and Political Strategy

The "Two-Thirds" Threshold – Under the Tenth Schedule, a merger is valid only if at least two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) of the members of the legislature party agree to it. With 7 out of 10 MPs defecting, the numerical requirement for a "merger exception" was technically met.

NDA Majority – This shift increased the BJP's individual strength to 113 seats, allowing the NDA to cross the halfway mark in the Rajya Sabha for the first time, significantly easing the passage of contentious legislation.

Turncoat Politics – Critics label the move as "crass opportunism," where ideological commitments are sacrificed for political power. It reflects a trend of "turncoat politics" that undermines the stability of the multi-party system.

3. Internal Dynamics of the Defecting Bloc

Institutional Fragility – The episode highlights the lack of a robust institutional identity within the AAP beyond its core leadership.

Organic vs. Opportunistic Divide –

Organic Members – Leaders like Raghav Chadha and Sandeep Pathak are seen as the party's ideological core.

Opportunistic Members – The defecting MPs are perceived as having joined the party for personal gain, later exiting when strategic advantages shifted.

Ideological Contradiction – AAP, which had previously been a vocal critic of the "horse-trading" of Congress MLAs, now finds its own Rajya Sabha bloc collapsed under similar circumstances.

4. Constitutional & Legal Controversy – The Tenth Schedule

The "Gang of Seven" episode brings to the fore critical gaps in the Tenth Schedule –

The Merger Loophole – Paragraph 4 of the Tenth Schedule protects members from disqualification in cases of mergers. However, legal experts argue the law is being "circumvented" to facilitate group defections rather than genuine ideological mergers of parent parties.

Conflating Party with Legislature – A primary legal challenge rests on whether a "Legislature Party" can decide to merge when the "Parent Political Party" remains intact and opposed to the move.

5. Judicial Backdrop – The 2023 Supreme Court Clarification

The AAP has challenged the Chairman's decision, citing the 2023 Supreme Court ruling which established a clear distinction –

Political Party Legislature Party – The Court held that the power to decide on a merger or issue a whip resides with the Political Party (the organizational wing), not just the Legislature Party (the elected wing).

Conflation Risk – Critics argue that by accepting the merger based solely on the MPs' decision, the Chairman may have conflated these two distinct entities, potentially violating the spirit of the 2023 judgment.

6. Institutional and Ethical Concerns

Erosion of the Mandate – Post-election shifts in loyalty undermine the trust of the voters who elected representatives based on a specific party symbol and manifesto.

Role of the Presiding Officer – The Chairman's role as an impartial arbiter is under scrutiny. Timely and transparent adjudication is essential to maintain the dignity of the office.

"Impotent" Legislation – The frequency of large-scale defections (as seen in various state assemblies and now the Rajya Sabha) suggests the Anti-Defection Law has failed to act as a deterrent.

7. Way Forward

Legal Clarity – There is an urgent need to amend the Tenth Schedule to clarify that a merger of a legislature party is only valid if the original political party also merges.

Time-Bound Adjudication – Implementing the Supreme Court's recommendation for an independent tribunal or a fixed timeframe for presiding officers to decide on disqualification petitions.

Ethical Reinforcement – Political parties must foster internal democracy and institutional loyalty to move beyond personality-driven structures.

Conclusion

The AAP-BJP merger episode serves as a stark reminder of the widening gap between the letter and the spirit of the Indian Constitution. While numerical majorities are essential for governance, they must not be achieved at the cost of institutional integrity. Strengthening the anti-defection framework is not merely a legal necessity but a moral imperative to safeguard the foundational principles of Indian parliamentary democracy.

Source – https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/gang-of-seven-on-the-aap-defections/article70913116.ece#google_vignette

Question

"The Tenth Schedule was intended to strengthen the foundations of Indian democracy by curbing unprincipled defections; however, the 'merger' provision has frequently been utilized to circumvent the law's primary objective. Elaborate on the constitutional challenges arising from the 'two-thirds' merger rule and suggest reforms to prevent the subversion of the popular mandate." (250 Words, 15 Marks)

1. Introduction

The Tenth Schedule, introduced via the 52nd Constitutional Amendment (1985), was designed to eliminate the "Aaya Ram, Gaya Ram" culture of opportunistic floor-crossing. While it penalizes individual defections, it provides an exception for "mergers." In the current political landscape, large-scale shifts—such as a group of legislators claiming a merger despite the parent political party remaining intact—have raised significant concerns regarding the subversion of democratic ethics.

2. The Constitutional Challenges of the Merger Exception

The "Merger" rule (Paragraph 4) presents several structural and legal challenges –

The Numerical Loophole – The law protects members from disqualification if two-thirds of the members of the legislature party agree to a merger. This has shifted the focus from individual "defection" to

"wholesale defection," where large groups switch loyalties to avoid penalties while claiming constitutional protection.

Conflation of Entities - As highlighted by the Supreme Court in the Subhash Desai v. Governor of Maharashtra (2023) case, there is a vital distinction between the Political Party (the organizational wing) and the Legislature Party (the elected wing). The current challenge arises when a legislature party decides to merge while the parent political party continues to exist and operate independently.

Role of the Presiding Officer - The Speaker or Chairman acts as a quasi-judicial authority. However, the lack of a fixed timeframe for deciding on disqualification petitions and the potential for perceived partisan bias in recognizing "mergers" often lead to judicial delays that render the mandate ineffective.

3. Subversion of the Popular Mandate

Erosion of Representative Accountability - Voters elect candidates based on a specific party manifesto and symbol. Post-election shifts in the Rajya Sabha or State Assemblies violate this "contract" between the representative and the voter.

Weakening of Parliamentary Scrutiny - Group defections often result in an artificially bolstered majority for the ruling coalition, hollowing out the Opposition and reducing the effectiveness of legislative oversight.

4. Suggested Reforms

To restore the integrity of the Tenth Schedule, the following measures are essential -

Clarification of 'Merger' - The law should be amended to state that a merger of the legislature party is valid only if the original political party (the organizational wing) also merges with the other party.

Independent Tribunal - Following the recommendations of the Supreme Court (Keisham Megha Chandra Singh case), the power to decide disqualifications should be transferred to an independent, permanent tribunal headed by a retired judge to ensure impartiality.

Time-Bound Adjudication - A mandatory timeframe (e.g., three months) should be established for presiding officers to dispose of defection cases to prevent the "legitimization" of defections through administrative delay.

Bar on Public Office - Members who defect should be barred from holding any remunerative political post or contesting elections for the remainder of the House term.

5. Conclusion

The 2026 developments in the Rajya Sabha underscore that while the Tenth Schedule provides a legal framework, it lacks the "teeth" to prevent strategic circumvention. Protecting the sanctity of the Indian democracy requires moving beyond mere numerical thresholds and anchoring the law in the Political Party's identity. Only by closing these procedural loopholes can the Constitution ensure that the mandate of the people is not traded for political expediency.

Source - https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/gang-of-seven-on-the-aap-defections/article70913116.ece#google_vignette

2. How Iran war is testing the limits of 'fossilisation' of Indian farms (IE)

GS Paper III - Indian Economy and Issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development, and Employment; Agriculture.

Topic - Major crops-cropping patterns, different types of irrigation, storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers.

Sub-Topic - Fossil Fuel Dependency and Input Vulnerability.

Introduction

The 2026 West Asia crisis, marked by disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, has illuminated a critical structural flaw in India's agrarian model - its overwhelming dependency on fossil fuel-based inputs. While the Green Revolution successfully decoupled India from "ship-to-mouth" food dependence, it inadvertently tethered national food security to global petroleum markets. With agriculture now a high-

input, energy-intensive sector, geopolitical volatility in energy-rich regions translates directly into farm-gate distress and potential food inflation.

1. The Structural Shift – From Animate to Mechanical Power

Indian agriculture has undergone a fundamental energy transition since the 1960s, moving from circular, renewable systems to linear, non-renewable ones.

Decline of Bovine-based Systems – Traditional farming utilized bullocks for draught power and animal waste as organic manure, creating a self-sustaining loop.

The Mechanization Milestone – Mechanical and electrical power overtook animate power in the 1990s.

Current Scale of Mechanization – Tractor sales reached a record 1.16 million units in 2025–26, signaling a point of no return for diesel-dependent primary tillage and transport.

Irrigation Transformation – The replacement of traditional Persian wheels with high-capacity electric and diesel pump sets has improved water access but cemented the sector's energy dependence.

2. Green Revolution and the "Petro-Chemical" Link

The productivity gains of the modern era are deeply rooted in petrochemical derivatives.

Input Intensification – High-Yielding Varieties (HYVs) are specifically engineered to respond to concentrated chemical nutrients, demanding a high-input ecosystem.

The Fertiliser-Energy Nexus – * **Nitrogenous Fertilisers (Urea)** – Production relies on ammonia, which uses natural gas as the primary feedstock.

Import Reliance – India's consumption surged to 32.9 million tonnes of NPK in 2024–25, with over 90% of P & K (Phosphatic and Potassic) demand met through imports of finished products or raw materials like sulphur.

Crop Protection – Pesticides and herbicides utilize petroleum-based solvents and emulsifiers, making crop health contingent on petrochemical supply chains.

3. Geopolitical Risks and Global Supply Chain Vulnerabilities

The 2026 tensions in West Asia serve as a "stress test" for India's agricultural resilience.

Strategic Chokepoints – Disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz impact not just crude oil, but also the transit of LNG and finished fertilisers.

Commodity Architecture – Beyond crude, India relies on West Asia for 65.8% of its sulphur imports (critical for phosphatic fertilisers) and 60% of its natural gas.

Price Volatility – Geopolitical conflicts trigger "asymmetric shocks," where energy importers like India face a dual burden of higher import bills and rising agricultural subsidy requirements.

Export Restrictions – Strategic maneuvering by major producers (e.g., Russia, China) can lead to sudden supply shortages, threatening the Kharif and Rabi sowing cycles.

4. Socio-Economic and Environmental Implications

The energy-intensive nature of modern farming creates a cascading effect on the rural economy.

Farmer Distress – Rising diesel and fertiliser prices increase the cost of cultivation, shrinking profit margins for small and marginal farmers.

Fiscal Pressure – To maintain price stability, the government must increase fertiliser subsidies, which strains the national exchequer (estimated at ₹1.7 trillion for FY2026–27).

Ecological Degradation – Excessive reliance on chemical inputs leads to declining crop response, soil health deterioration, and multi-nutrient deficiencies.

5. Way Forward – Toward Decoupling and Resilience

To achieve "Strategic Autonomy" in food security, India must diversify its agricultural energy and input base.

Diversification of Inputs – * Promoting Organic and Bio-fertilisers to reduce the Urea-Natural Gas link.

1. Scaling the adoption of Nano-Urea to eliminate bulk import requirements.

Energy Diversification – * Encouraging Solar-powered irrigation (PM-KUSUM) to move away from diesel/grid electricity.

1. Promoting electric farm machinery and solar-powered cold chains.

Sustainable Practices – Shifting toward Natural Farming (Bhartiya Prakriti Krishi Paddhati) and Integrated Nutrient Management to restore soil health.

Domestic Self-Reliance – Reviving domestic fertiliser plants and securing long-term supply agreements with non-West Asian nations (e.g., Morocco, Russia, USA) to diversify risk.

Conclusion

The current vulnerability is a reminder that Food Security is Energy Security. While mechanization and chemicals were the engines of 20th-century growth, 21st-century resilience requires a "Circular Green Revolution." Reducing fossil fuel dependency through sustainable alternatives is no longer an ecological choice but a geopolitical and economic imperative for India's future.

Source – <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/iran-war-fossilisation-indian-farms-10657145/>

Question

"The transition of Indian agriculture into a high-input, energy-intensive sector has effectively made national food security a subset of global energy security. Discuss this statement in light of recent geopolitical instabilities and their impact on the Indian agrarian economy." (250 Words, 15 Marks)

1. Introduction

Post-Green Revolution, Indian agriculture shifted from a circular, animal-based system to a linear, fossil fuel-driven model. While this transformation was essential for achieving self-sufficiency in food grains, it created a structural dependency on petrochemical derivatives. In 2026, with the West Asia crisis disrupting energy chokepoints, it is evident that the "farm-to-fork" chain is now deeply tethered to the "well-to-wheel" energy cycle.

2. The Energy-Agriculture Nexus

The dependency of modern farming on fossil fuels is visible across three primary pillars –

The Fertilizer Link – Nitrogenous fertilizers (like Urea) are produced using ammonia derived from natural gas. India's massive consumption of 32.9 million tonnes of NPK (2024-25) relies heavily on imported gas and feedstock, making crop nutrition sensitive to global price spikes.

Mechanization & Diesel – The rapid mechanization of the sector, evidenced by 1.16 million tractor sales in 2025-26, has replaced draught animals with diesel engines. Fuel price volatility now directly dictates the cost of tillage, harvesting, and irrigation.

Agro-Chemicals – Pesticides and herbicides are largely petrochemical derivatives. Disruptions in the global petrochemical supply chain (especially from West Asian hubs) jeopardize crop protection and yield stability.

3. Impact of Geopolitical Instability (2026 Context)

The crisis in West Asia and the potential blockade of the Strait of Hormuz act as a stress test for this model –

Import Vulnerability – India imports nearly 85% of its crude oil and a significant share of its fertilizer raw materials. Supply disruptions lead to immediate shortages and "asymmetric shocks" to the sowing cycle.

Fiscal Burden – Rising global prices force the government to increase fertilizer and fuel subsidies (straining the exchequer) or pass the cost to farmers, leading to agrarian distress and food inflation.

Supply Chain Resilience – Strategic maneuvering by major energy exporters exposes India's food security to the "will of global players," compromising its strategic autonomy.

4. Way Forward – Decoupling Agriculture from Fossil Fuels

To safeguard food security, India must pursue a "Strategic Decoupling" strategy –

Input Diversification – Scaling Nano-Urea to reduce bulk imports and promoting Organic/Natural Farming to restore soil health through non-chemical means.

Energy Transition – Expanding the PM-KUSUM scheme to transition from diesel pumps to solar-powered irrigation.

Domestic Resilience – Investing in indigenous fertilizer production and securing long-term supply agreements outside volatile regions like West Asia (e.g., Morocco or Russia).

5. Conclusion

The current vulnerability proves that Food Security can no longer be viewed in isolation from Energy Security. While the Green Revolution gave India its "quantity," the current era demands a "Circular Green Revolution" focused on strategic resilience. Decoupling agriculture from its heavy fossil fuel dependency is not just an ecological goal but a geopolitical and economic imperative to ensure the long-term viability of the Indian farm sector.

Source – <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/iran-war-fossilisation-indian-farms-10657145/>

3. A quiet revolution in depository architecture (BL)

General Studies Paper – General Studies Paper III – Indian Economy

Topic – Financial market infrastructure

Sub-Topic – Capital markets and investor protection

Introduction

India's depository system, anchored by institutions like National Securities Depository Limited and Central Depository Services Limited, has undergone a structural transformation. While these reforms have enhanced efficiency and scale, they have also redefined institutional roles, raising new concerns for investor protection and regulatory accountability.

1. Evolution of Depository Architecture

1. Depositories have evolved from passive record-keeping entities to active financial intermediaries.
2. Expansion includes services such as settlement, voting rights, and asset servicing.
3. Integration with broader financial systems has increased their systemic importance.

2. Key Structural Shifts

Expansion of Functions

1. Depositories now manage diverse financial and quasi-financial assets beyond equities.

Widening Scope of Assets

1. Inclusion of bonds, mutual funds, insurance products, and other instruments.

Shift in Institutional Design

1. Movement from a principal-agent model to a membership-based framework.

3. From Agents to Members – Institutional Transformation

1. Earlier, depository participants (DPs) acted as agents of depositories.
2. Now, DPs function more like members with greater autonomy and influence.
3. This shift redistributes accountability and weakens direct control by depositories.

4. Implications for Investor Protection

Diffuse Accountability

1. Responsibility is no longer clearly centralised, complicating grievance redressal.

Regulatory Challenges

1. Regulators must now oversee a more complex, decentralised system.

Potential Conflict of Interest

1. Membership structures may blur lines between ownership and oversight.

5. Benefits of the Transformation

1. Improved efficiency and faster settlement processes.
2. Greater scalability and ability to handle high transaction volumes.
3. Enhanced financial inclusion through wider asset coverage.

6. Risks and Concerns

1. Increased systemic risk due to higher centrality in financial markets.

2. Weakening of traditional safeguards designed under earlier frameworks.
3. Need to redefine legal and regulatory accountability structures.

7. Role of Regulation

1. Securities and Exchange Board of India must adapt regulatory frameworks to evolving structures.
2. Strengthening oversight mechanisms and clarifying liability is essential.
3. Balancing innovation with investor protection remains a key challenge.

8. Way Forward

1. Clearly define roles and responsibilities within the new architecture.
2. Strengthen investor grievance redressal mechanisms.
3. Enhance transparency in operations and governance.
4. Continuously update regulatory frameworks to match structural changes.

Conclusion

The transformation of India's depository architecture marks a significant step in financial market evolution. However, ensuring robust investor protection and regulatory clarity is essential to sustain trust and stability in the system.

Source - <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/a-quiet-revolution-in-depository-architecture/article70913286.ece>

Question

Q. "Structural changes in India's depository system have enhanced efficiency but complicated investor protection." Discuss the implications of this transformation and suggest measures to address emerging challenges. (250 words)

Introduction

India's depository system has evolved significantly, transitioning from a simple record-keeping framework to a complex financial infrastructure. While these changes have improved efficiency, they have also introduced new challenges for investor protection.

Implications of Structural Changes

1. Expansion of functions has increased the systemic importance of depositories in financial markets.
2. The shift from an agency-based to a membership-based model has diffused accountability.
3. Greater autonomy of depository participants has reduced direct oversight by central institutions.
4. Increased complexity has made regulatory supervision more challenging.

Benefits

1. Faster and more efficient settlement processes have improved market functioning.
2. Broader asset coverage has enhanced financial inclusion.
3. Improved scalability supports growing transaction volumes.

Challenges

1. Lack of clarity in accountability complicates grievance redressal.
2. Potential conflicts of interest arise from overlapping roles of participants.
3. Existing regulatory frameworks may not fully address new risks.

Measures

1. Strengthen regulatory oversight and clearly define institutional responsibilities.
2. Enhance transparency and disclosure requirements.
3. Improve investor grievance redressal mechanisms.
4. Regularly update legal frameworks to align with structural changes.

Conclusion

The evolving depository architecture reflects the growing sophistication of India's financial markets. Ensuring effective regulation and investor protection will be critical to sustaining confidence and long-term stability.

Source – <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/a-quiet-revolution-in-depository-architecture/article70913286.ece>

4. Overhauling India's social security (BS)

General Studies Paper – General Studies Paper III – Indian Economy

Topic – Social sector initiatives relating to welfare schemes

Sub-Topic – Labour reforms and formalisation of economy

Introduction

India's social security architecture, centred around Employees' Provident Fund Organisation and Employees' State Insurance Corporation, has expanded coverage but remains fragmented, inefficient, and misaligned with modern labour markets. With new labour codes in place, there is a need for comprehensive structural reform.

1. Evolution of India's Social Security System

1. Designed in the mid-20th century for a formal, stable workforce.
2. Focused on retirement savings (EPFO) and health insurance (ESI).
3. Expansion has increased coverage but not necessarily effectiveness or adequacy.

2. Key Structural Issues

Limited Coverage and Exclusion

1. Large sections of informal and gig workers remain outside the system.

Inefficiency and Underperformance

1. ESI healthcare services often fail to meet quality expectations.

High Compliance Burden

1. Employers face complex regulations, discouraging formalisation.

Poor Returns and Design Flaws

1. EPFO returns and rigid contribution structures limit flexibility for workers.

3. Fiscal and Operational Concerns

1. Significant funds remain underutilised or inefficiently allocated.
2. Cross-subsidisation and administrative inefficiencies reduce system effectiveness.
3. Mismatch between contributions and actual benefits received.

4. Changing Nature of Work

1. Rise of gig economy, contract work, and platform-based employment.
2. Traditional employer-employee models are becoming less relevant.
3. Social security systems must adapt to portable and flexible benefit structures.

5. Need for Comprehensive Reform

Universal and Portable Coverage

1. Extend benefits to informal and gig workers through flexible frameworks.

Simplification of Compliance

1. Reduce regulatory burden on employers to encourage formalisation.

Improving Service Delivery

1. Upgrade healthcare infrastructure and digital systems under ESI.

Rationalising Contributions

1. Align contributions with wages, inflation, and individual preferences.

6. Role of Technology and Integration

1. Use digital platforms and APIs for seamless portability of benefits.
2. Integrate EPFO, ESI, and other schemes into a unified social security system.
3. Improve transparency, efficiency, and real-time access to benefits.

7. Challenges in Reform

1. Political resistance due to perceived reduction in benefits.

2. Balancing fiscal sustainability with expanded coverage.
3. Ensuring administrative capacity for implementation.

8. Way Forward

1. Transition towards a universal, flexible, and technology-driven social security system.
2. Strengthen governance and accountability of institutions.
3. Encourage public-private partnerships in service delivery.
4. Align reforms with labour codes and evolving employment patterns.

Conclusion

Reforming India's social security system is essential to ensure inclusive growth and labour welfare in a changing economic landscape. A modern, integrated, and flexible framework will be key to achieving this goal.

Source - https://www.business-standard.com/opinion/columns/epfo-esi-overhaul-required-to-unlock-india-s-formal-jobs-potential-126042701415_1.html

Question

Q. "India's social security system requires structural reforms to align with the changing nature of employment." Discuss the challenges in the existing system and suggest measures for comprehensive reform. (250 words)

Introduction

India's social security system, anchored by EPFO and ESI, was designed for a formal workforce. However, changing employment patterns and structural inefficiencies necessitate comprehensive reforms.

Challenges in Existing System

1. Limited coverage excludes a large informal and gig workforce.
2. ESI healthcare services often underperform, reducing trust in the system.
3. High compliance burden discourages employers from formalisation.
4. Rigid contribution structures and modest returns limit flexibility and adequacy.
5. Administrative inefficiencies and underutilisation of funds reduce effectiveness.

Need for Reform

1. Expanding coverage to informal and gig workers is essential for inclusive growth.
2. Simplifying compliance can encourage formal job creation.
3. Improving service delivery will enhance credibility and utilisation.
4. Aligning contributions and benefits with modern economic realities is necessary.

Measures

1. Introduce universal and portable social security frameworks.
2. Integrate EPFO and ESI systems using digital platforms.
3. Rationalise contribution structures and improve investment efficiency.
4. Strengthen governance and accountability mechanisms.

Conclusion

A modern, flexible, and inclusive social security system is critical for India's economic transformation. Structural reforms will ensure better protection for workers while supporting sustainable growth.

Source - https://www.business-standard.com/opinion/columns/epfo-esi-overhaul-required-to-unlock-india-s-formal-jobs-potential-126042701415_1.html

