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News: Ministry, UNDP sign pact on SDGs

- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have signed a joint statement of understanding on localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.
- At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership
- 17 Goals are: No poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health & Well Being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Clean Water & Sanitation, Affordable & Clean Energy, Decent work & Economic Growth, Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure, Reduced Inequalities, Sustainable Cities & Communities, Responsible Consumption & Production, Climate Action, Life Below water,

Life on Land, Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions and Partnership for the Goals.



News: Anti-Defection Law

- Recently, the Vice-President has said that the time has come to amend the anti-defection legislation in the country to plug existing loopholes.

Anti Defection Law

- The anti defection law punishes individual Members of Parliament (MPs) or MLAs for leaving one party for another.

- Parliament added it to the Constitution as the Tenth Schedule in 1985. Its purpose was to bring stability to governments by discouraging legislators from changing parties.
- The Tenth Schedule –popularly known as the Anti-Defection Act –was included in the Constitution via the 52nd Amendment Act, 1985.
- It sets the provisions for disqualification of elected members on the grounds of defection to another political party.
- It was a response to the toppling of multiple state governments by party-hopping MLAs after the general elections of 1967.
- However, it allows a group of MP/MLAs to join (i.e., merge with) another political party without inviting the penalty for defection. And it does not penalize political parties for encouraging or accepting defecting legislators.
- As per the 1985 Act, a 'defection' by one-third of the elected members of a political party was considered a 'merger'.
- But the 91st Constitutional Amendment Act of 2003 changed this and now at least two-thirds of the members of a party must be in favour of a "merger" for it to have validity in the eyes of the law.
- The members disqualified under the law cannot stand for elections from any political party for a seat in the same House.

- The decision on questions as to disqualification on ground of defection is referred to the Chairman or the Speaker of such House, which is subject to 'Judicial review'.
- However, the law does not provide a timeframe within which the presiding officer has to decide a defection case.

Grounds of Disqualification

- If an elected member voluntarily gives up his membership of a political party.
- If he votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party or anyone authorized to do so, without obtaining prior permission.
- As a pre-condition for his disqualification, his abstention from voting should not be condoned by his party or the authorized person within 15 days of such incident.
- If any independently elected member joins any political party.
- If any nominated member joins any political party after the expiry of six months.

Different Suggestions related to the Anti-defection Law

- The Election Commission has suggested it should be the deciding authority in defection cases.
- Others have argued that the President and Governors should hear defection petitions.
- The Supreme Court has suggested that Parliament should set up an independent tribunal headed by a retired judge of the higher judiciary to decide defection cases swiftly and impartially.
- Some commentators have said the law has failed and recommended its removal. Former Vice President Hamid Ansari has suggested that it applies only to save governments in no-confidence motions.