

EDITORIALS – 20TH JUN 2026

1. Defection as Merger

(GS Paper II Polity)

This editorial 'Defection as Merger' was published in The Hindu on 20th Jun 2026, highlights how engineered defections misuse the Tenth Schedule's merger exception to weaken representative democracy.

Anti-Defection Framework

- The Tenth Schedule disqualifies members who voluntarily leave their party or defy the party whip during voting.
- The 2003 amendment removed the one-third split provision but retained the two-thirds merger exception.
- This exception now enables engineered defections, as groups claim merger protection without a genuine parent party merger.
- The Supreme Court has held that a merger cannot involve only the legislature party, but must include the parent party.
- Six Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs seeking the Shinde faction route reflect how the two-thirds threshold can become an escape mechanism.

Pattern of Political Crossovers

- Rebel TMC MPs claimed support of 20 of 28 Lok Sabha members, seeking BJP-led NDA alignment through merger claims.
- AAP's Rajya Sabha strength fell from 10 to three after MPs joined the BJP, showing similar crossover politics.
- Pending constitutional questions allow presiding officers to prolong stretched claims, making the Tenth Schedule practically weak.
- The cumulative defections increase the ruling NDA's strength in both Houses, raising issues beyond technical legality.

Democratic Legitimacy

- The two-thirds rule was designed to ensure wide consensus, especially for constitutional amendments needing broad support.
- Defections bypass this intent by converting post-election crossovers into lawful mergers, weakening representative democracy.

- When mandates are altered without voters, the practice becomes an affront to the Constitutional spirit.

Beyond Editorial

Electoral Mandate as Public Trust

- Voter consent: Defections dilute voter choice because candidates win on party symbols and alliances, as seen when 10 Goa Congress MLAs joined the BJP in 2019.
- Mandate distortion: Post-poll switching can convert opposition strength into ruling support, as seen during Maharashtra's 2022 split that changed government formation.
- Public trust: Haryana's Gaya Lal episode in 1967 still symbolises opportunistic crossovers, making voters view legislators as negotiable political assets.
- Manifesto accountability: Karnataka's 2019 resignations showed how elected mandates weaken when legislators abandon the platform on which the government was formed.
- Money power: Large-scale defections raise suspicion of inducements or offices, as seen in Madhya Pradesh's 2020 political crisis before the Kamal Nath government fell.
- Constituency ethics: Voters have no immediate remedy when representatives switch sides, except delayed bypolls or the next election, weakening democratic accountability.
- Democratic legitimacy: Anti-defection reform must protect government stability without allowing legislators to become instruments of post-election bargaining and mandate conversion.

2. Right of Way (GS Paper II Polity)

This editorial 'Right of Way' was published in The Hindu on 20th Jun 2026, highlights why the constitutional right to walk needs footpath infrastructure, legal clarity and cultural change.

Right to Walk

- The Supreme Court has expanded Article 21 since the 1970s, now treating walking on demarcated footpaths as a fundamental right.

- Justices P.S. Narasimha and Atul S. Chandurkar reaffirmed this right while awarding compensation for a five-year-old's death in Karnataka.
- Motorised transport has made walking inconvenient, as motorists often treat pedestrian spaces as a nuisance to be tolerated or cleared.
- India lacks a national law on pedestrian rights, leaving safety divided across municipal laws, town-planning statutes and street-design guidelines.
- Pedestrians are treated as safe if they face no immediate harm, while cities lack continuous, unobstructed footpaths.
- Existing footpaths face encroachment from parking, vendors, utilities, debris and road widening, weakening practical right of way.

Law, Culture and Implementation

- A right to walk needs cultural acceptance that pavements belong to pedestrians, otherwise legal recognition alone remains weak.
- Rights-based laws have mixed results, as the Street Vendors Act, 2014 protected livelihoods but implementation remains uneven.
- Municipalities continue eviction drives because surveys, town vending committees and vending zones were delayed or abandoned.
- Weak implementation enabled rent-seeking by officials, while the new walking-right judgment may create disputes with the 2014 Act.
- Public-smoking curbs under COTPA, 2003 succeeded through sustained messaging and small fines, not restitutionary remedies.
- Littering persists despite laws and Swachh Bharat, because citizen segregation duties were stressed while state waste-collection duties lagged.

Limits of Judicial Nudge

- Judicial recognition may remain legal consolation after tragedy unless state funds shift towards pedestrian infrastructure.
- Using the judgment to "cleanse" streets of informal commerce could gentrify public space and threaten the urban poor.

Beyond Editorial

Walkable Cities, Inclusive Citizenship

- **Urban equality:** Walking is basic mobility for workers, children and elderly citizens, as recognised in the National Urban Transport Policy, 2006.
- **Gender safety:** Well-lit footpaths, crossings and transit access improve women's mobility, especially near bus stops, metro stations and workplace clusters.

- Disability inclusion: Ramps, tactile paving and clear pavements make accessibility real under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.
- Public health: Walkable neighbourhoods reduce short motorised trips, support active mobility and help polluted cities like Delhi cut avoidable vehicle dependence.
- Livelihood balance: Pedestrian safety must coexist with vending livelihoods, as PM SVANidhi highlighted the economic role of street vendors after COVID-19.
- Urban planning: Chennai's Pondy Bazaar pedestrian plaza shows how redesigned streets can prioritise walkers, public space and access over parking dominance.
- Civic citizenship: A walkable city treats pedestrians as rights-bearing citizens, not as obstacles to cars, flyovers or elite urban design.

3. US diktat on AI makes case for global regulation (GS Paper III Science and Technology)

This editorial 'US diktat on AI makes case for global regulation' was published in The Indian Express on 20th Jun 2026, highlights why unilateral control over frontier AI access strengthens the case for transparent global AI regulation.

AI Access and Sovereignty

- The U.S. directive asking Anthropic to suspend foreign nationals' access to Fable 5 and Mythos 5 has raised concerns over unilateral control of frontier AI.
- The episode strengthens calls for technological sovereignty, as one government can restrict advanced AI access without consultation or transparency.
- The issue is not only access but also the risks of deploying frontier models without independent oversight and a robust global governance framework.

Regulatory Framework

- Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei has called for binding AI regulation, arguing that transparency alone is inadequate for frontier systems.
- The directive reportedly arose from safeguard-circumvention concerns, but its lack of clear national security details exposed deeper accountability gaps.
- The core governance question is whether access decisions should rest with governments using export controls or private executives shaped by commercial strategy.
- A credible framework needs defined principles, technical testing, auditing and the power to block or reverse unsafe model release.

- Amodei's proposal for testing by a qualified third party reflects the need for independent safety assessment before frontier AI deployment.

Global Governance and India

- AI's transformative and borderless nature makes unilateral national action inadequate; regulation must emerge through global consensus.
- Inclusive governance must give all stakeholders a seat at the table, not only powerful states or private AI companies.
- India is a critical stakeholder because its large AI user base and vast data contribute to global AI systems' value and capability.
- India must actively shape the international regulatory framework that will govern AI's future.

Beyond Editorial

AI Dependency in the New Tech Order

- Strategic autonomy: Sudden technology restrictions expose external dependence, as seen in U.S. curbs on advanced chips and AI hardware exports to China.
- Compute power: Control over GPUs, cloud systems and training capacity is now strategic, as shown by global demand for Nvidia H100 chips.
- Data value: India's large user base generates valuable data, but domestic capability is needed to capture value through the IndiaAI Mission, 2024.
- Regulatory leverage: Capacity-rich regions shape rules first, as seen in the European Union's AI Act, 2024, which influences global compliance norms.
- Public services: AI in welfare, health or policing needs oversight because errors can affect rights, as privacy debates around DigiYatra indicate.
- Language inclusion: Indian-language AI is essential for digital inclusion, as Bhashini seeks to bridge language barriers in public-service delivery.
- Global South voice: India can link AI safety with development equity, continuing its G20 emphasis on responsible, inclusive and human-centric AI.