

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

Demands have been made from time to time in certain quarters for strengthening and amending the Anti-defection Law as contained in the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution of India, on the ground that these provisions have not been able to achieve the desired goal of checking defections. The Tenth Schedule has also been criticised on the ground that it allows bulk defections while declaring individual defections as illegal. The provision for exemption from disqualification in case of splits as provided in paragraph 3 of the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution of India has, in particular, come under severe criticism on account of its destabilising effect on the Government.

2. The Committee on Electoral Reforms (Dinesh Goswami Committee) in its report of May, 1990, the Law Commission of India in its 170th Report on "Reform of Electoral Laws" (1999) and the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC) in its report of March 31, 2002 have, *inter alia*, recommended omission of said paragraph 3 of the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution of India pertaining to exemption from disqualification in case of splits. The NCRWC is also of the view that a defector should be penalised for his action by debarring him from holding any public office as a Minister or any other remunerative political post for at least the duration of the remaining term of the existing Legislature or until, the next fresh elections whichever is earlier. It is proposed to accept these suggestions.

3. The NCRWC has also observed that abnormally large Councils of Ministers were being constituted by various Governments at Centre and States and this practice had to be prohibited by law and that a ceiling on the number of Ministers in a State or the Union Government be fixed at the maximum of 10% of the total strength of the popular House of the Legislature.

4. In the light of the above, it is proposed to amend the Constitution by omitting paragraph 3 of Tenth Schedule to the Constitution of India and to provide that the size of the Council of Ministers should not be more than 10% of the strength of House or Houses concerned whether Unicameral or Bicameral. However, in case of smaller States like Sikkim, Mizoram and Goa having 32, 40 and 40 Members in the Legislative Assemblies respectively, a minimum strength of 7 Ministers is proposed.

5. The Bill seeks to achieve the objects mentioned above.

ARUN JAITLEY.

G. C. MALHOTRA,
Secretary-General.