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The Constitution’s 12 Schedules and the Venkatachaliah Commission

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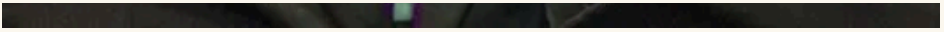
The Constitution’s 12 Schedules and the Venkatachaliah Commission

The Constitution started with 8 **Schedules** — detailed lists and rules the main text doesn’t spell out. Amendments have grown that number to 12.





Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah headed the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2000–2002). Photo: Prathyush Thomas, GFDL 1.2 / Free Art License, via Wikimedia Commons.

> **Growth** 8 Schedules originally, 12 now, added through amendments.
> **Most tested** The Seventh Schedule's Union, State, and Concurrent Lists.
> **Not absolute** Even Ninth Schedule laws can face basic-structure review.
> **Still live** The Tenth Schedule's merger exception is before the Supreme Court, 2026.

Schedule: A detailed list or rulebook attached to the Constitution, spelling out something the main text only mentions.

Ninth Schedule: A list of laws given special protection from certain court challenges.

Tenth Schedule: The anti-defection law, disqualifying legislators who switch parties.

Venkatachaliah Commission: A 2000–2002 body that reviewed how well the Constitution was working.

1 From 8 to 12 Schedules

Must Know

The Constitution originally had 8 Schedules. Amendments have expanded this to 12. Each one holds a detailed, practical list or rule that the main constitutional text doesn't spell out on its own.

This growth shows the Constitution is not frozen in 1950. Each new Schedule added a real, working function as India's governance needs changed over the decades.

Worked example: Exams often just test the count itself — 8 Schedules at the start, 12 today. Knowing the number is step one; knowing what each one covers is step two, which the rest of this article builds.

> **Quick check 1.** the Constitution has always had exactly 12 Schedules, since 1950. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

2 The First and Seventh Schedules

Must Know

The First Schedule

This lists every state and union territory that makes up India, along with each one's territorial extent. Think of it as the map of India, written directly into the Constitution.

The Seventh Schedule

This holds the **Union List, State List, and Concurrent List** — the three lists that divide law-making subjects between the Centre and the states. It decides who is allowed to make which law, and it is the single most-tested Schedule in exams.

Worked example: If a question asks "which Schedule lists the states of India," the answer is the First. If it asks "which Schedule divides law-making powers between Centre and states," the answer is the Seventh — two very different jobs, easy to mix up under exam pressure.

3 The Ninth and Tenth Schedules

Must Know

The Ninth Schedule

Added by the **First Amendment, 1951**, to protect land-reform laws from being challenged in court. The Supreme Court later ruled that even Ninth Schedule laws can still be tested against the Constitution's basic structure — so this shield is real, but not absolute.

The Tenth Schedule

Added by the 52nd Amendment. This is the **anti-defection law** — it disqualifies legislators who switch political parties after being elected.

Worked example: Ninth = a shield for land-reform laws, added in 1951. Tenth = the anti-defection rulebook, added by the 52nd Amendment. Both numbers get swapped in exam options — fix the pairing, not just the numbers.

Quick check 2. the Tenth Schedule was added by the First Amendment. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

4 The Fifth and Sixth Schedules

Good to Know

The Fifth Schedule

This governs Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in states other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram — giving these areas special protection under general rules.

The Sixth Schedule

This sets up **Autonomous District Councils** in the tribal areas of the Northeast: Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. These four states get more self-rule than the Fifth Schedule's areas get elsewhere.

Worked example: An Autonomous District Council in Mizoram falls under the Sixth Schedule, not the Fifth — Mizoram is one of the four named Sixth Schedule states. Fifth = general Scheduled Areas protection, everywhere else. Sixth = stronger Northeast self-government, only these four states.

5 The Eleventh and Twelfth Schedules

Good to Know

The **Eleventh Schedule**, added by the 73rd Amendment, lists subjects that Panchayats — village-level local bodies — can govern.

The **Twelfth Schedule**, added by the 74th Amendment, lists subjects that Municipalities — town and city governments — can govern.

Worked example: Remember the pairing by order: 73rd Amendment came first and added the Eleventh (villages, Panchayats). 74th Amendment came right after and added the Twelfth (towns and cities, Municipalities).

6 The Ninth Schedule's limit, and anti-defection's gap

Great to Know

The Ninth Schedule's shield has a limit

The Ninth Schedule was meant to make certain laws impossible to challenge in court — this mattered most for land-reform laws right after Independence.

I.R. Coelho (2007) confirmed that Ninth Schedule laws still remain open to basic-structure review. The shield blocks most challenges, but not one that threatens the Constitution's basic structure itself.

Worked example: No law is truly above the Constitution — not even one placed in the Ninth Schedule specifically to dodge judicial review.

Anti-defection's known gap

A legislator who leaves their party can be disqualified under the Tenth Schedule, unless it counts as a genuine party merger. This is meant to discourage switching sides mid-term.

The law sets no fixed time limit for the presiding officer to decide a defection case. Decisions can drag on for months or years — exactly the gap now being tested in a live 2026 Supreme Court case (see "In the news" below).

Quick check 3. the anti-defection law sets a fixed deadline for deciding a defection case. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

7 The Venkatachaliah Commission

Great to Know

The **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution** was set up in 2000, headed by **Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah**, to assess how well the Constitution was actually functioning in practice.

It examined electoral reform, Centre-State relations, and judicial accountability, and submitted its report in 2002.

Worked example: Venkatachaliah headed a review that ran from 2000 to 2002 — not a Schedule itself, but a body that studied how all these Schedules and provisions were working together. It remains a standard reference in constitutional-reform debates today.

8 The pattern examiners keep testing

Schedule questions almost always ask you to pair a Schedule number with its content, or name who headed a commission.

- **Number-to-content pairing:** exams love mismatched-pair questions — know what each Schedule actually holds, not just its number.
- **Named commissions:** Venkatachaliah headed the 2000–2002 constitutional review — a recurring “who headed” question.
- **Procedural gaps:** the anti-defection law’s missing time limit is a specific, testable fact, not just a general weakness.

Asked before

PYQ 1 · UPSC CDS (I) 2021, Q63

Who among the following was the Chairman of the National Commission for Review of the Working of the Constitution (2000)?

(a) Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah
(b) Justice J.S. Verma
(c) Justice Ranganath Mishra
(d) Justice Y.K. Sabharwal

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Asked before

PYQ 2 · CDS (II) 2022, Q42

Consider the following pairs of Schedule and Content of the Constitution of India: 1. First Schedule : Forms of Oaths or Affirmations 2. Third Schedule : Allocation of seats in the Council of States 3. Fifth Schedule : Provisions related to the administration of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes 4. Ninth Schedule : Provisions related to the administration of tribal areas in certain States. How many of the above pairs is/are correctly matched ?

(a) 1
(b) 2
(c) 3
(d) 4

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9 In the news

The Supreme Court tests the Tenth Schedule's merger exception

On 20 July 2026, Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal filed a petition challenging how the Tenth Schedule's "merger exception" is being used. His argument: it lets a minority faction of legislators dodge anti-defection disqualification just by claiming a "merger." That happens even when the original party never actually merges.

On 27 July 2026, a Supreme Court bench of Justices P.S. Narasimha and Alok Aradhe issued notice on the petition. The Court called this "enormous issues" in the anti-defection law. It tagged the case with two related pending matters. One is the Goa MLAs' defection case. The other is Shiv Sena (UBT)'s challenge to the Speaker's approval of a merger with the Shinde faction. (Source: LiveLaw)

The legal question: the Tenth Schedule lets a legislator escape disqualification if two-thirds of their legislative party joins another party. The live dispute is whether that two-thirds test alone is enough, or whether the original political party must also formally merge.

This is the exact Tenth Schedule this article's own cards cover, now tested against a real, current constitutional challenge — not a hypothetical. It shows a Schedule's plain text can still leave real room for legal dispute, decades after it was written.

Quick Q&A

- **Which Schedule is the single most-tested one in exams?** The Seventh Schedule — it holds the Union, State, and Concurrent Lists that divide law-making power between the Centre and the states.
- **Can a law in the Ninth Schedule ever be struck down?** Yes. I.R. Coelho (2007) confirmed Ninth Schedule laws can still face basic-

structure review, even though the Schedule blocks most ordinary challenges.

- **Which four states does the Sixth Schedule cover?** Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram — nowhere else.
- **What is the known weakness in the anti-defection law?** It sets no fixed deadline for a presiding officer to decide a defection case, so decisions can drag on for months or years.

Practice MCQs

1. Which Schedule, added by the 52nd Amendment, contains the anti-defection law?

A. The Ninth Schedule

B. The Eighth Schedule

C. The Eleventh Schedule

D. The Tenth Schedule

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **D.** The Tenth Schedule, added by the 52nd Amendment, contains the anti-defection law governing disqualification of legislators. ↑ Q1

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** ↑ 1
2. **False.** ↑ 2
3. **False.** ↑ 3

Previous year answers

1. **(a) Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah** Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah headed the Commission that reviewed the Constitution's working across electoral reform, Centre-State relations, and judicial accountability.
2. **(a) 1** Only pair 3 is correct. The First Schedule lists States and Union Territories. The Third Schedule covers oaths, and the Fourth Schedule covers Rajya Sabha seats. The Ninth Schedule protects land-reform laws. Tribal-area administration belongs to the Sixth Schedule.

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