

Overreach: on the T.N Governor meeting govt. officials

It is an act of constitutional impropriety for the Governor of a State to review the work of government officials when an elected regime is in place. [By holding meetings in Coimbatore](#) to review programmes, the Tamil Nadu Governor, Banwarilal Purohit, has left himself open to charges that he has breached the constitutional limits of his office. Mr. Purohit met the District Collector, the Commissioner of Police and the Corporation Commissioner without any Minister present. The Governor has attempted to explain his interactions, saying he was seeking to familiarise himself with the administration and that he could appreciate its work in implementing schemes only if he got to know all details first hand. But this is hard to accept as a justification and his plan to visit all districts for a similar review does not augur well for parliamentary democracy. Article 167 of the Constitution says it is the Chief Minister's duty to communicate to the Governor all decisions of the Council of Ministers relating to the administration and proposals for legislation. It enjoins the Chief Minister to furnish such information relating to the administration as the Governor may call for. If Mr. Purohit wants to understand how schemes are being implemented, he can seek details from the Chief Minister, Edappadi K. Palaniswami, instead of holding meetings in the districts. There may be occasions when the Governor may need to ask a top bureaucrat or the head of the police force for a report on a major incident or development, but even that should be for the limited purpose of getting an accurate picture before sending a report to the Centre.

The political context in which Mr. Purohit is exhibiting his zeal to familiarise himself with the administration is significant. There is a sense of drift in governance in Tamil Nadu, and it is widely believed that it is running on 'autopilot'. The Chief Minister's majority in the Assembly is in doubt, given that the Speaker had to disqualify 18 dissident legislators to shore up his support within the legislature party. An impression has gained ground that the Bharatiya Janata Party is seeking to fill the perceived political vacuum, but is caught in a bind on how to go about it because of its lack of a political base in Tamil Nadu. Therefore, the Centre is seen as leaning on the State government and the ruling AIADMK to help the BJP gain a political foothold. The prospect of the State coming under a spell of President's Rule if the present regime formally loses its majority in the House is on everyone's mind. Therefore, Mr. Purohit's familiarisation exercise is bound to be read for signs of what the future has in store. Mr. Purohit will do well not to fuel such speculation. None of this, of course, implies that the Governor should refrain from taking an independent view of any matter or legislative proposal. But his functioning should be within the bounds of established norms and conventions.

Revving up infrastructure spending is necessary, but not sufficient

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