TN Governor’s Misadventure

What is the issue?

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- The utility of a politically vested governor (particularly if he is incongruous to the concerned state government) has been contested for long.
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- Amid multiple controversies brewing, the calls for removing the current TN governor has gained significant strength.
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What is the role of the Governor?

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- **Constitutional -** Governor is the bridge between the concerned state government and the union government.
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- The office needs to be above politics to maintain neutrality and deserve the trust all concerned political parties and people.
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- He is the nominal executive head of the concerned state and exercises certain functions in accordance with the Constitution.
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- The Governor will normally be aided and advised by the Council of Ministers except in those functions which specifically calls for his discretion.
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- **State Laws -** Governor also enjoys statutory powers under laws made by the state legislatures (which can also be modified by the concerned legislatures).
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- For example, Govener functions as ex-officio Chancellor of some universities through university specific laws like “Anna University Act - 1978”.
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- The reason for such conferment is to ensure that the university administration and finances come under stricter and high profile supervision.
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- In his capacity as chancellor, as the Governor is bound by state laws, it implicitly means that he has to work on the advice of the council of ministers.
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- Significantly, this was even iterated in some of the previous Supreme Court pronouncements in landmark cases like “Samsher Singh vs. Punjab - 1974”.
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What are the TN Governor’s misgivings?

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- The Governor has also been conducting “review meetings” with officials across the state, which is an over-reach of his Constitutional duties.
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- The appointment of a vice-chancellor to Anna University without consulting the state government is also a blatant violation of law.
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- **The Scandal -** Recently, an assistant professor was found to be involved coercing her college students into an allegedly high profile sex-racket.
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- Leaked voice tapes had actually even indicated the involvement of some form within the governor’s office – which was a shocker.
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- In this backdrop, in an unprecedented over-reach into the state government’s domain, the governor commissioned an enquiry into the episode.
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- Hence, when a press briefing was called for by the governor, it was thought that he would clarify the legal basis for his actions.
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- **Suspicion -** Once the media interactions began, it became amply clear that he was ill prepared to handle the barrage of questions that were hurled at him.
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- His only counter point to the accusations against of his alleged involvement in the controversy was that he was really old for such mis-deeds.
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- **Professionalism -** At the end of the press interaction, the Governor patted a woman journalist in her cheek instead of replying to a question of hers.
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- This was perceived as “sexually inappropriate, paternalistic and unprofessional” and promted outrage.
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- Signficantly, the governor had later clarified that it was merely a

grandfatherly affection and had apologised for the same, but that didn’t cut ice.
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How does the future look?

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- Due to the multiple controversies that the Governor has courted, many political parties have called for removal (or voluntary resignation).
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- But the Governor is expected to braze the storm with stubbornness due the strong political backing that he seems to be enjoying from the ruling quarters.
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- Significantly, the Supreme Court has specified multiple clauses for the removal of a Governor and “Unprofessional Conduct” is one of them.
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Source: Indian Express

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