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The Governor Who Forgot His Job

Context

- The 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly election created a major constitutional controversy concerning the powers of the **Governor**, the meaning of **democratic mandate**, and the functioning of **parliamentary democracy** in India.
- The **Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK)**, led by **C. Joseph Vijay**, emerged as the single largest party with 108 seats in the 234-member Assembly, defeating both the DMK and AIADMK, which had dominated the State for nearly six decades.
- However, Governor of Tamil Nadu refused to immediately invite Vijay to form the government and instead demanded signed letters from 118 MLAs before administering the oath.
- This decision raised serious questions regarding **constitutional morality**, **federalism**, and the neutrality of constitutional authorities.

The Constitutional Role of the Governor

- **Limited Scope of Gubernatorial Powers**

- In a parliamentary system, the Governor's responsibility after elections is limited to identifying the individual most likely to command the confidence of the Assembly.
- The Governor is expected to act as **a neutral constitutional authority** rather than as a political decision-maker.
- The **Sarkaria Commission**, **Venkatachaliah Commission**, and **Punchhi Commission** clearly established that the leader of the largest party or alliance capable of forming a stable government should ordinarily be invited first.
- By demanding prior proof of majority support, the Governor departed from accepted constitutional practice.
- Such actions expanded **gubernatorial discretion** beyond its legitimate constitutional limits.

- **Violation of Democratic Conventions**

- The refusal to swear in Vijay despite his party being the largest in the Assembly weakened the principle of **democratic accountability**.
- The people had delivered a clear electoral verdict, yet procedural obstacles delayed the formation of the government.
- This created the impression that constitutional authority was being exercised selectively rather than impartially.

Historical Precedents and Selective Constitutionalism

- The controversy becomes more significant when compared with earlier precedents in **Goa**, **Manipur**, and **Karnataka**.
- In these States, Governors invited the **BJP** to form governments despite the party not being the largest in the Assembly.
- In Karnataka in 2018, the BJP with 104 seats was invited to form the government even though the Congress-Janata Dal(S) alliance had already secured majority support.
- These examples reveal inconsistent use of constitutional conventions.
- Broad discretion was exercised when it benefited one political party, while stricter standards were applied in Tamil Nadu.
- Such inconsistency encourages allegations of **partisanship** and damages public trust in constitutional institutions.

Constitutional Validity of Minority Governments

- Indian parliamentary history demonstrates that **minority governments** are constitutionally legitimate.
- Governments led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, P.V. Narasimha Rao, H.D. Deve Gowda, I.K. Gujral, and Manmohan Singh all functioned with outside support or without an absolute majority at the time of formation.
- The Constitution does not require a Chief Minister-designate to submit signed letters proving majority support before taking office.

- The true test of legitimacy is the **floor test** in the legislature. A government remains in power until it loses a **motion of no confidence**.
- Therefore, demanding signatures before swearing in a government contradicts long-standing parliamentary tradition.

The Dangers of an Early Confidence Vote: Encouragement of Horse-Trading

- Another controversial decision was the Governor's direction that Vijay prove his majority within seventy-two hours.
- Such a narrow deadline creates opportunities for **horse-trading**, defections, and political instability.
- The **anti-defection law** was enacted to prevent exactly this type of political manipulation.
- During the Karnataka crisis of 2018, the **Supreme Court of India** recognised that delays before confidence votes could encourage engineered defections.
- However, imposing extremely short deadlines can be equally harmful because they destabilize newly formed governments and encourage political bargaining.
- Parliamentary democracy requires stability, debate, and legislative accountability rather than rushed political manoeuvring.

The Way Forward: Need for Judicial Clarification

- The controversy highlights the need for clearer constitutional guidelines regarding government formation.
- Important judgments such as **R. Bommai** and **Rameshwar Prasad** addressed the misuse of constitutional powers, but ambiguities still remain regarding the Governor's discretion.
- The Supreme Court should firmly establish three principles:
- The Governor's role is limited to identifying the leader most likely to command confidence.
- A government's majority should be tested only on the floor of the House.
- Newly formed governments should not be destabilized through arbitrary deadlines or political pressure.
- Such clarification would strengthen **constitutional governance**, protect **federalism**, and reduce political misuse of constitutional offices.

Conclusion

- The Tamil Nadu controversy demonstrates how constitutional conventions can be manipulated for political purposes.
- Respect for **constitutional morality**, **democratic mandate**, and **parliamentary democracy** is essential for preserving India's federal structure.
- Governors are expected to function as impartial guardians of the Constitution rather than instruments of political strategy.
- Constitutional authorities must respect the will of the people above all else, because in a democracy the final authority rests not with the Centre, but with the voter.

The Governor Who Forgot His Job FAQs

Q1. What controversy arose after the 2026 Tamil Nadu election?

Ans. A controversy arose because the Governor refused to immediately invite the leader of the single largest party to form the government.

Q2. Why was the Governor's action criticized?

Ans. The Governor's action was criticized because it violated established constitutional conventions and democratic principles.

Q3. What is the proper constitutional test for majority support?

Ans. The proper constitutional test for majority support is a floor test in the legislative Assembly.

Q4. Why are minority governments considered valid in parliamentary democracy?

Ans. Minority governments are considered valid because they can continue in office as long as they retain the confidence of the House.

Q5. What role should the Supreme Court play in such situations?

Ans. The Supreme Court should clarify constitutional rules regarding gubernatorial discretion and government formation.

Source: **The Hindu**

Advancing India-South Korea Defence Innovation Ties

Context

- India and South Korea have steadily expanded defence cooperation since establishing diplomatic relations in 1973.
- Their defence partnership began formally with the 2005 MoU on defence industry and logistics, which promoted collaboration in defence production, procurement, and research.
- In 2010, the two countries signed separate agreements on defence cooperation and defence research and development.
- This enabled military exchanges, joint exercises, training, and collaboration in emerging technologies through links between DRDO and South Korean defence firms.
- The relationship was elevated to a **Special Strategic Partnership in 2015**.
- Later, the 2020 Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation expanded collaboration in land, naval, aerospace, and guided weapon systems, including technology transfer and investments in India's defence corridors.
- A major example of this partnership is the K9 Vajra-T artillery system, jointly manufactured in India by Larsen & Toubro and Hanwha Aerospace under the 'Make in India' initiative.

Korea-India Defence Accelerator (KIND-X)

- During the 2026 India-South Korea Summit between PM Modi and President Lee Jae Myung, the two countries announced a new defence innovation initiative called the Korea-India Defence Accelerator (KIND-X).

- KIND-X aims to strengthen defence innovation cooperation by connecting:
 - defence start-ups,
 - businesses,
 - incubators,
 - investors, and
 - universities from both countries.
- The initiative follows models similar to:
 - INDUS-X between India and the United States, and
 - FRIND-X between India and France.
- It reflects India's growing focus on defence startup ecosystems and international technology partnerships.
- KIND-X is expected to be jointly led by: Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) of South Korea, and Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO) of India.
- It is expected to support the broader objectives of the 2020 India-South Korea Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation, including technology development, industrial collaboration, and defence manufacturing partnerships.

Potential of the Korea-India Defence Accelerator (KIND-X)

- The Korea-India Defence Accelerator (KIND-X) is expected to deepen defence cooperation between India and South Korea by creating a joint ecosystem for defence research, innovation, co-development, and co-production.
- It could facilitate:
 - shared access to laboratories and testing facilities,
 - joint certification and standardisation systems, and
 - accelerator and incubator programmes linking innovators and investors.
- The platform may also organise workshops to help companies understand:
 - export control rules,
 - defence funding systems, and
 - intellectual property and licensing frameworks related to technology transfer and co-production.
- An annual summit, modelled on INDUS-X, may bring together government officials, defence firms, universities, and think tanks from both countries to review progress and strengthen strategic cooperation.
- **Expanding Industrial and Innovation Linkages**
 - KIND-X is expected to build on successful projects such as the K9 Vajra-T programme involving Larsen & Toubro and Hanwha Aerospace.
 - The initiative could link South Korea's industrial clusters in Changwon, Daejeon, and Gumi with India's defence corridors in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, along with aerospace hubs in Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad.
 - Large companies such as Hyundai, Tata Advanced Systems, Mahindra Group, Bharat Forge, Hanwha, LIG, and Kangnam are expected to participate alongside start-ups and research institutions.

KIND-X as a Defence Innovation Bridge

- The launch of the KIND-X reflects the growing intent of India and South Korea to integrate their deep-tech innovation ecosystems for defence and dual-use technologies.
- It is expected to complement cooperation in several strategic sectors, including:
 - shipbuilding,
 - artificial intelligence,
 - space technology,
 - semiconductors, and
 - critical minerals.
- The initiative aligns with:
 - India's Defence Forces Vision 2047, and
 - South Korea's Defence Innovation 4.0 strategy.
- Both countries aim to jointly invest in advanced and future-oriented defence technologies.
- As both countries expand their defence exports, KIND-X could become an important mechanism for co-development, technology transfer, and global defence market collaboration.
- **Need for Concrete Implementation**
 - The success of KIND-X will depend on how effectively both defence ministries establish:
 - funding mechanisms,
 - governance structures, and
 - clearly defined areas of joint innovation and deliverables.

Advancing India-South Korea Defence Innovation Ties FAQs

Q1. What is the Korea-India Defence Accelerator (KIND-X)?

Ans. KIND-X is a defence innovation platform connecting startups, industries, universities, investors, and governments of India and South Korea for joint defence technology development.

Q2. Which organisations are expected to lead KIND-X?

Ans. KIND-X is expected to be jointly led by South Korea's Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) and India's Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO).

Q3. Which successful defence project reflects India-South Korea cooperation?

Ans. The K9 Vajra-T artillery system, jointly produced by Larsen & Toubro and Hanwha Aerospace under Make in India, reflects successful bilateral defence cooperation.

Q4. Which sectors can benefit from KIND-X collaboration?

Ans. KIND-X can strengthen cooperation in artificial intelligence, semiconductors, space technology, shipbuilding, critical minerals, autonomous systems, and defence manufacturing ecosystems.

Q5. What factors will determine the success of KIND-X?

Ans. The success of KIND-X will depend on funding mechanisms, governance structures, industry participation, technology partnerships, and clearly defined areas of innovation and deliverables.

Source: TH

India's Clean Mobility Push at a Turning Point - Delhi EV Policy 2.0 and CAFE-3 Reforms

Context

- India's transition towards clean mobility has entered a decisive phase with two major policy developments.
- The draft Delhi EV Policy 2.0 released for public consultation, and the revised draft of CAFE-3 (Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency) norms circulated by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE).
- Together, these measures could determine whether India moves from gradual EV adoption to a large-scale transformation in **transport decarbonisation**.

Delhi EV Policy 2.0 - A Shift from Incentives to Regulation:

- **Delhi as a pioneer in urban mobility reform**

- Delhi has historically acted as a laboratory for urban transport reforms with initiatives like early adoption of metro rail, modernisation of public bus systems, and the launch of the landmark Delhi EV Policy 2020.
- The new draft policy builds on this legacy and marks a major policy shift.

- **Key features of Delhi EV Policy 2.0**

- **Phase-out of internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles**

- The most significant proposal is the phased ban on new registrations of ICE vehicles in key segments –
 - **ICE three-wheelers:** No new registrations from January 2027
 - **ICE two-wheelers:** No new registrations from April 2027
- Since two- and three-wheelers constitute nearly 75% of Delhi's vehicle sales, this is a transformational intervention.

- **Clear regulatory direction**

- Unlike earlier approaches centred mainly on subsidies, the policy provides long-term regulatory certainty, predictable transition timelines, and clear signals to manufacturers and investors.
- This encourages manufacturing investments, supply-chain development, and innovation in EV technology.

- **Significance of the policy - Moving beyond subsidy-driven adoption**

- India's EV growth has largely depended on incentives such as purchase subsidies, tax benefits, and state incentives. However, subsidies alone cannot achieve scale.
- Global experience shows that rapid EV adoption occurs when incentives are combined with mandatory targets, ICE phase-out timelines, and strong regulatory signals.
- Delhi's policy represents India's shift toward this model.

Revised CAFE-3 Norms

- **What are CAFE norms?**

- Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) norms regulate average fuel efficiency and emissions standards for automobile manufacturers.
- They are India's principal regulatory tool for improving fuel economy and reducing transport emissions in the passenger vehicle segment.

- **Why CAFE-3 matters**

- Passenger vehicles remain a weak link in India's EV transition, for example, EV penetration in passenger cars is only around **4%**.
- Hence, stricter efficiency standards are essential for accelerating electrification.

- **Positive changes in the revised draft**

- **Reduced bias towards small petrol vehicles:** Earlier provisions that disproportionately favoured small petrol vehicles have been tightened.
- **Flexible compliance mechanisms:**
 - The draft introduces credit pooling, and purchase of compliance credits.
 - These mechanisms **ease industry transition**, maintain pressure for higher efficiency standards, and promote regulatory accountability.

Broader Strategic Importance

- **Energy security dimension:** India imports nearly 90% of its crude oil requirements, making transport electrification strategically important.
- **EV transition can help:**
 - Reduce oil import dependence
 - Improve energy security
 - Lower current account pressure
 - Reduce urban pollution
 - Achieve climate commitments

Key Concerns Regarding Revised CAFE-3 Norms

- **Super-credit multipliers for hybrid technologies**

- The draft continues to provide generous compliance credits for strong hybrids, plug-in hybrids, and flex-fuel vehicles.
- **Why this is problematic:** These are not truly zero-emission technologies. Over-incentivising hybrids may delay full electrification, lock India into intermediate technologies, and slow long-term decarbonisation goals.

- **Policy paralysis**

- CAFE-3 has remained under discussion for more than three years, despite multiple consultations and draft revisions.
- Impacts of delay – manufacturers postpone investments, supply chains evolve slowly, market uncertainty persists, etc.
- Hence, finalising CAFE-3 is now a matter of **urgency** rather than refinement.

Freight Transport – The Missing Piece in India’s Decarbonisation Strategy

- **Emission imbalance in freight sector**

- Trucks constitute only 3% of India’s vehicle fleet, yet contribute around 44% of transport emissions.
- This makes freight transport one of the most critical sectors for decarbonisation.

- **Weaknesses in current framework**

- India’s heavy-duty vehicle regulations currently rely on model-specific fuel efficiency standards.
- However, they lack fleet-average efficiency mechanisms, strong incentives for zero-emission trucks, and systemic regulatory pressure.
- As a result, investment in electric trucks remains weak, and hydrogen-based freight mobility progresses slowly.

Suggested Reforms for Freight Sector – CAFE Like Norms for Commercial Vehicles

- **Proposed features**

- Fleet-average fuel efficiency standards
- Differentiation based on payload categories
- Incentives for zero-emission trucks
- Strong regulatory push for electrification
- Without such reforms, schemes like the e-Truck initiative of the Ministry of Heavy Industries may struggle to scale.

Way Forward

- **India should “technologically pole vault”:** Directly into zero-emission mobility, similar to its leap in digital public infrastructure, and mobile telephony adoption.
- **Develop freight decarbonisation framework:** Introduce fleet-average standards for trucks. Incentivise electric and hydrogen freight vehicles.
- **Prioritise full electrification:** Reduce excessive incentives for hybrids. Focus on zero-emission mobility.
- **Improve institutional capacity of BEE:** The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) must act more decisively as a regulator rather than merely a consultative body.
- **Integrate EV transition with renewable energy:** India already possesses expanding renewable energy capacity, large domestic market and manufacturing potential. These strengths should be leveraged for clean mobility leadership.

Conclusion

- India stands at a **crucial inflection point** in its clean mobility transition. Delhi EV Policy 2.0 and the proposed CAFE-3 norms together provide an opportunity to shift from incremental progress to systemic transformation.
- While the policy direction is encouraging, delays, regulatory ambiguity, and overreliance on transitional technologies could weaken momentum.
- **A decisive push** towards full electrification is essential not only for climate goals but also for energy security, industrial competitiveness, and sustainable urban development.
- India now needs **bold execution** to match its clean mobility ambitions.

India’s Clean Mobility Push FAQs

Q1. Why subsidies alone cannot ensure large-scale EV adoption in India?

Ans. Because initiatives like ICE phase-out timelines and stringent fuel efficiency norms are essential for sustained EV adoption beyond subsidies.

Q2. What is the significance of Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) norms?

Ans. They act as India’s primary regulatory mechanism to improve fuel efficiency, reduce transport emissions, and accelerate vehicle electrification.

Q3. Why is the freight transport sector considered the weakest link in India’s transport decarbonisation strategy?

Ans. Although trucks form only 3% of the vehicle fleet, they contribute nearly 44% of transport emissions and lack a robust regulatory framework for electrification.

Q4. What are the challenges posed by excessive policy support for hybrid vehicles in India’s EV transition?

Ans. Over-incentivising hybrids risks technological lock-in and may delay India’s transition towards fully zero-emission mobility solutions.

Q5. Why is transport electrification not merely an environmental imperative but also a strategic economic necessity for India?

Ans. With nearly 90% dependence on oil imports, transport electrification enhances energy security, reduces import vulnerability, etc.

Source: IE

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/daily-editorial-analysis-11-may-2026/>

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