



## State Governor-Regime Disagreement - West Bengal Case

### What is the issue?

- West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar made a visit to areas hit by post-poll violence in Cooch Behar.
- In this context, it is imperative to understand if this would constitute a transgression of the bounds of constitutional propriety.

### What are the recent disagreements?

- Governor Dhankhar has been a habitual critic of the Mamata Banerjee (Chief Minister) regime in West Bengal.
- He has been seen ignoring the principle that constitutional heads should not air their differences with the elected regimes in public.
- As recently as December 2020, Ms. Banerjee had appealed to the President to recall the Governor.
- This was for political statements that she believed were being made by him at the behest of the BJP-led Union government.

### What is the larger concern in this regard?

- The norms of representative government ought to be a natural restraint on the Governor's gubernatorial tendency to breach limits.
- A former West Bengal Governor, Gopalkrishna Gandhi, came in for some criticism for setting aside the restraints of constitutional office.
- He was criticised for expressing "cold horror" at the police firing that left 14 protesters dead at Nandigram in 2007.
- So, the gubernatorial office ought not to be an impediment to the Governor yielding to the moral urge to condemn incidents of rare enormity.
- But, the larger principle that the Governor should not offer public comment on situations best handled by the representative regime has to be upheld.

- In the case of Mr. Dhankhar, what worsens his persistent criticism of the TMC regime is the congruency between his words and the interests of the BJP.

### **What is the right way forward?**

- Post-poll celebrations in West Bengal degenerated into triumphalism and attacks on the losing side.
- Post-election violence is something that should not be witnessed at all in an electoral democracy.
- The onus is on Ms. Banerjee to restore order and end the violence.
- This should be the case even if she believed that the extent of the violence was being exaggerated by the Opposition.
- On the other hand, regardless of one's view of a regime's inaction, there should be no departure from constitutional prescriptions of governor's powers.
- Any advice or warning the Governor wants to give to the elected government ought to be in private and in confidence, and not in public.

**Source: The Hindu**



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