

## SR Bommai Case - UPSC Polity Notes

The SR Bommai case gave one of the landmark judgements of the Supreme Court regarding the basic structure doctrine, as well as, regarding the blatant misuse of Article 356. This is an important topic in the UPSC polity and governance segments for the [IAS exam](#). In this article, you can read all about the background of the Bommai case and the implications of the judgement.

### SR Bommai Case - Background

SR Bommai was the Karnataka Chief Minister between August 1988 and April 1989. He led a Janata Dal government, which was dismissed on 21st April 1989 when President's Rule ([Article 356](#)) was imposed in Karnataka.

- Until that time, imposing Article 356 on states ruled by the opposition parties (to the one at the centre) was a common practice.
- In this particular case, the Bommai-led government was dismissed on the grounds that he had lost his majority because of several defections (that were politically motivated and master-minded).
- Even though Bommai presented the then [Governor](#) P Venkatasubbaiah with a copy of the resolution passed by the Janata Dal Legislature Party, he was denied an opportunity to prove his majority in the house.
- Bommai first went to the Karnataka High Court against the Governor's decision. However, his writ petition was dismissed by the High Court.
- Then, Bommai moved the [Supreme Court of India](#).
- This case took almost five years to see judgement.
- In March 1994, a nine-judge constitutional bench of the SC gave the landmark judgement, which would go on to become one of the most widely cited one with respect to Article 356 and its arbitrary usage by the Central government.

### Bommai Case Judgement

This landmark verdict put restrictions on the centre for imposing the President's Rule on states.

- It said that the power of the President to dismiss a government of a state is not absolute.
- It said that the President should use this power only after his proclamation (of imposing President's Rule) has been approved by both Houses of the Parliament.
- Until then, the President can only suspend the Legislative Assembly.
- In case the proclamation does not get the approval of both the Houses, it lapses at the end of a period of two months, and the dismissed government is revived.
- The suspended Legislative Assembly also gets reactivated.
- The SC also stated that the proclamation of the imposition of Article 356 is subject to [judicial review](#).

### SR Bommai Case Significance

This case ended the practice of arbitrarily dismissing the state government by the central government. Earlier, political parties used this mechanism given in the Constitution to get political mileage and settle scores with opposition parties. The Bommai verdict restricted this practice to a large extent.

- The verdict also stated in no uncertain terms that the test of majority of the government should be done in the floor of the Assembly and is not subject to the Governor's opinion.

- In this case, there was no question of a constitutional amendment but even so, the concept of basic doctrine was applied.
- The Supreme Court held that policies of a state government directed against an element of the [basic structure of the Constitution](#) would be a valid ground for the exercise of the central power under Article 356.

## UPSC Questions related to SR Bommai Case

### Who was SR Bommai?

Somappa Rayappa Bommai was the 11th Chief Minister of Karnataka. He was also the union Human Resource Development minister from 1996 to 1998.

### What is the significance of the SR Bommai versus the Union of India case?

The Bommai verdict spelt out clearly that the imposition of Article 356 by the President on a state government should not be arbitrary and there should be a solid ground for it. This judgement largely helped put an end to the arbitrary impositions seen until then.