

By Sidharth Mishra



We living in the capital seldom try to look inwards and are always ready to find excuse for our follies. Last week newspaper headlines screamed putting the blame on West Asia for the hell that we have created for ourselves, which has in turn helped pharmaceutical companies see their sale graphs soar. Delhi has been covered with smog, a layer of polluted air for a fortnight now and none seem to be worried about the way the whole city is turning sick. We have been going through our lives as usual at best the arguments now focus on which is best gas mask in the market. Chief Minister ArvindKejriwal has done what he does best, blamed the world for the smog in the city and has tried turning the misery into an opportunity to once again demand more powers for his government. One wonders if Ministers know only one way to get even with the problems of the capital -- by acting in an odd manner, thus the plea to bring in the odd-even car rationing scheme.

One would have not been surprised if Kejriwal's deputy Manish Sisodia, who takes credit for even routine events in the city, would have released an advertisement that smog would help government school children as they would breathe harder and prepare for tougher times. Or may be give a contract to some fly by night operator to install a few air purifiers and then release an advertisement claiming that AAP Government was the first to give such facilities in the government schools. And then there is this breed of lazy reporters who live on the Press handouts. They eagerly lapped up the report by the government's air quality research body – Safar. The report said that the dust travelling thousands of kilometre from a severe storm in the Gulf contributed significantly to the weeklong killer smog that choked Delhi-NCR and much of north India from November 7 onwards. SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research) further said dust coming in from the Gulf constituted nearly 40% of pollutants in the smog while stubble-burning in Punjab and Haryana contributed around 25%. Making up the remaining 35% was pollution produced locally in Delhi-NCR.

Why did we blame the West Asia for our misery and not take up the case of 35 percent pollution produced locally in Delhi-NCR. It had to be diplomats living in the city who had to bell the cat. City's diplomatic community distressed by the government's silence over the issue knocked on the doors of the Dean of Diplomatic Corps, Frank Hans Dannenberg Castellanos, to take up the issue with Ministry of External Affairs.

Ambassador of Dominican Republic, Castellanos sought time with the Foreign Ministry to

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convey the grievances of envoys who apparently want to know from MEA if the government was seriously doing anything to deal with the situation.

In fact there was news of Costa Rican envoy having moved out of the city to escape the misery. The high levels of air pollution in Delhi have in fact led to many people leaving the city in search of cleaner air. Costa Rican ambassador to India, Mariela Cruz Alvarez too has joined the ranks. Alvarez has said she developed respiratory illness and moved to Bengaluru. According to newspaper reports Alvarez said that she was taking rest and recovering in the green surroundings of south India.

“I am sick with a serious upper respiratory infection due to New Delhi’s unbreatheable air. My tropical lungs couldn’t take the toll. It is not funny to see your lungs expelling a dark residue as if I was a smoker — which i am not. ..We need to wake up fast. India I love you and it hurts me to see you drowning in loads of plastic and toxic air. Where is the leadership? Clean air and water are basic human rights,” she wrote in her blog post.

However, such things do not shame the city government. Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia instead of taking the criticism of having failed to spend the green tax money was quick to point fingers at the Centre. According to media reports, Deputy CM Manish Sisodia responded to allegations of environment taxes worth at least Rs 1,003 crore being left unutilised with his government by attacking the BJP-led Centre on similar charges. He said at a press conference, “Nobody questions the Centre. They diverted at least Rs 56,000 crore earned from environment cess to other budgetary heads. Nobody asks even the Lieutenant Governor who has not been granting us land for a bus depot.”

“Instead, the media is saying we have orchestrated a scam by not using the environment taxes earned by us. The truth is that we are planning to buy electric buses and do much more to safeguard Delhi's air, but everyone accuses us freely,” he was reported as saying.

Now MrSisodia your government has been in power for nearly three years and the fact is that you have not been able to buy a single bus to augment the fast depleting fleet of the public transporter. The only thing which you have done in the past three years to divert public funds to pay for the bills raised by the private power companies in the name of subsidy to the consumers.

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As Joseph de Maistre, the most visionary of France's early counter-revolutionaries had said, "Every Nation gets the government it deserves;" so has Delhi got. Therefore then why blame West Asia for the misery we have elected.

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