

The Politics of Parali Burning Farmers of Punjab Being Feted by Delhi Government

Written by Administrator

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By Sidharth Mishra



Delhi is the city which travels from one crisis to another, seldom resolving either. At least that has been the story of the national Capital in the past few months, ever since the pandemic dawned during the spring of 2020.

Last week the newspaper headlines were going berserk on the fresh wave of the Coronavirus cases and the related fatalities, this week we are deluged with the information of farmers of Punjab on the march to Delhi. They are the same farmers who allegedly turned the city into a gas chamber burning parali (paddy stubble) in their fields, and now they with their 'ominous' presence left city's traffic in a gridlock.

Ordinarily, the Arvind Kejriwal government, which has been blaming the farmers of Punjab for turning the national Capital into a gas chamber, should have taken a stern view of their march. But on the contrary, it has decided the fete them in the city, giving sufficient signals of it being kind towards their cause. It goes without saying that Mr Kejriwal would go to these farmers in spring of 2022 seeking support during Punjab assembly polls for the kindness extended to them in Delhi during the winter of 2020.

The kind of alacrity with which the Delhi Government machinery moved to make these farmers 'comfortable' in the Burari grounds, the same readiness in other matters would have saved the city residents of many of their miseries and the ongoing catastrophe caused by the pandemic surge.

If one needed an evidence for this, one would just need to visit the orders passed by the Delhi High Court in the past few weeks on mismanaging Covid care in the city. In the last hearing, when the Delhi Government submitted that it has increased RT/PCR tests to 40,000 per day, the HC said that this happened only after loss of lives and a lot of prodding by the court.

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The governance deficit was also evident in the way Delhi Government failed to douse fire at the 200 feet tall garbage mount at Gazipur landfill. In fact, given the monstrous height this dump has acquired, its now an oxymoron to call it a landfill.

While the Kejriwal government often lets loose publicity blitzkriegs about Delhi being fast converted into a global city but it has never reveals that Delhi has the worst air of any capital on the planet, according to IQ AirVisual, a Swiss-based group that gathers air quality data globally.

While the parali fire had subsided in Punjab by third week of November, the air in the national Capital still continued to be toxic thanks to the failures to implement the environment rules. In the meeting with the Prime Minister last week, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that parali smoke was worsening the impact of the coronavirus outbreak. However, the true position is that more than half the pollutants in Delhi's air round the year are the result of toxic waste and smoke from the thousands of small and unregulated industrial units and dust from the never-ending construction.

Figures related to these unregulated industrial activities have been repeatedly forwarded by the environment groups but still Delhi government representative Atishi Marlena deposed before the central environment panel that it was Punjab and Haryana who were responsible for capital's toxic air. She demanded strict action against the two state governments. How about her own party's government in Delhi?

It was time for Delhi Government to address issues of governance deficit rather than evolve acts and actions, which would create 'positive vibes' for them. The Kejriwal government needs to create a legacy of god governance rather than hanker after a narrative of government victimized by one and all.

(The writer is Author and President, Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice)