

Need for Disengagement on The Delhi Borders Too

Written by Administrator
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By Sidharth Mishra



The Centre can rightly pat its back on the issue of disengagement with China in Eastern Ladakh without firing a bullet after the initial clashes in May last year. The Centre stood ground for full nine months before the disengagement could start. Hopefully the stand-off on Ghazipur, Singhu and Tikri borders doesn't take that long before the disengagement starts, though it has already been three months since farmers started to agitate.

In Eastern Ladakh, the sparse local population was not affected by the standoff. It was matter of strategic dominance which was at the core of the issue and it didn't affect lives of the millions as the standoff at the borders of the national Capital is affecting.

The government could afford the kind of time frame it had to resolve border issue in Ladakh but such strategy in case of Delhi borders has brought much harassment to the masses. Several lakh people in their vehicles and public transport buses cross borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to enter the national Capital and vice-versa for earning their livelihood.

Crossing these borders have become much more frustrating than it would ever have been to cross the Wagah border with Pakistan. The posse of policemen in riots gear ensure that the vehicles move at snails' pace and everyone has been made to add 30 minutes to one hour extra to their travel time just in case if they have to cross these borders.

To moot question is, who is accountable for the harassment caused to this daily migrant population. Since they are not voters in Delhi, they are not Mr Arvind Kejriwal's responsibility as he even barred their treatment in the Delhi Government hospitals.

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Little does he realise that all the tax – the state GST – that their places of work pay goes to Delhi Government's coffers, the tax on purchases in Delhi which they make also goes to the city government reserves. But still, Mr Kejriwal would prefer setting up a tent city in Burari because he is looking for votes in Punjab, and hold a lunch for Kisans and attend rally in Meerut as he now eyes the assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh.

The Centre too is not less to be blamed for the misery. The ball is in its court to resolve the crisis and its inability to do so is not winning it any admirers but losing many at a very fast pace. To add to the problem of vehicular logjams is the increased fuel prices.

On the average, given the jam and increased prices, the fuel budgets of individuals have gone up by half. The surge is sufficient to burn holes in the pockets of those who are trying to overcome the steep odds caused of the pandemic and the related lockdowns.

The Uttar Pradesh and Haryana governments too has been indifferent to this large daily migrant population, which either reside in the respective states or visits it on a daily basis for work. They have so far failed to create diversions and bypasses for smooth traffic and the spillover from border jams is such that even within the states the movement is very difficult.

If someone needs to visit Hissar from Delhi, the person needs to go southwards and cross borders at Gurgaon, reach Farooq Nagar to access the highway and then move northwards to Hissar, adding to wastage of time and fuel. This is not one single individual and a single day story but the story of the millions for the past 90 days.

But then migrants are no one's 'burden', nobody owns them. Their misery during the pandemic told us this and the standoff on Delhi's borders continue to tell the same tale.

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