

By Sidharth Mishra



The cat and mouse game between the Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal may have entered a decisive phase. Refusing to buckle down under the offensive by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Saxena, after the vitriolic attack let loose on him from the floor of Vidhan Sabha, has launched a counter. He first wrote a long letter to the Chief Minister countering him on each of the allegation made against him, and thereafter extended an invitation to Kejriwal for a tête-à-tête that is face to face meeting. Realizing the gravitas of the letter, Kejriwal has not been rank dismissive of it, as he did in the past calling the missives love letters.

However, the Chief Minister has tried to wriggle out from a face to face meeting saying that he is preoccupied with party work in Punjab. The sharp politician that he is, Kejriwal has tried an indirect counter by moving the Supreme Court for a 'time-bound' conduct of the Mayor's poll. It's another matter that his party councilors have been as much responsible for the disruption of the house proceeding as their BJP counterparts.

The 17 paragraph letter hits the Delhi government where it would hurt it most. It tears apart the 'Delhi Model of Education', exposing its hollowness paragraph after paragraph. The charges are brief but based on crisp facts backed by government statistics which the government would find difficult to counter.

The data mentioned shows that the number of children in Delhi's government schools was 16.1 lakh in 2013-14, but decreased to 15.1 lakh in 2019-20. The figures show that before 2013-14, every year the number of children in government schools was increasing by about 60,000, but after Kejriwal government came to office, the number started to decline.

Going by the rate of increase in numbers at the 2013-14 figures, the Delhi government

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schools today should have been housing about 20 lakh students but it's now down to 15 lakh. The claim of building world class infrastructures in the government schools too takes a beating.

The Raj Niwas letter mentions that the Lieutenant Governor in his capacity as the Chairman of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has allocated 13 plots for building new schools but work on none have started. He makes a direct charge that the government has counted the toilets made in the schools as classrooms.

The Lieutenant Governor makes the grievous charge of the government intently not initiating permanent appointment of school teachers to keep adhocism of guest teachers going. The L-G says that this process allows corrupt practice of salary being paid to ghost teachers. Saxena on the issue of training of teachers in Finland, makes it clear that it was nothing more than a junket for a few favourites as better training facilities were available in India at centres like the Indian Institutes of Management.

AAP leadership realizes that their gimmicks on the floor of the Delhi assembly, battle in the cyber-space through war of words on micro-blogging site Twitter and posturing on the roads was not really going to alter the course of Lieutenant Governor's actions.

Given the L-G's unyielding stance, AAP leadership realizes that the only relief for them could come from the courts, and thus under a strategy they have now moved the Supreme Court on Mayor's election. The petition has been framed in the manner and such questions raised that court may take some time to pass an order. This would help to ward off the heat raised in the MCD and by the Raj Niwas.

The best counsel for Kejriwal would be to face the points raised by the Raj Niwas, address the issues and bring governance back to the city. However, that's unlikely to happen.

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

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