

By Sidharth Mishra



Those who study public administration would know there a major area of discussion on the interface of permanent and political executive in governance. This topic becomes very dominant especially in democracy, where the political executives come and go, whereas bureaucracy aka permanent executive remains in office all through and also held accountable for major decisions.

The political executive comes to power on popular votes and it's always in the rush to get its manifesto implemented. The job of the permanent executive is to ensure that in the implementation of the agenda, the rules of governance are not compromised, so also the sovereignty of the Constitution.

This creates a challenge for both the permanent and the political executive for implementation of the popular manifesto without compromising on the rules. Here lies the genesis of the conflict between the Centre and the Delhi government on the control of the services department on which the Supreme Court has given the ruling.

The move made in 2015, soon after the Arvind Kejriwal government came to power, to bring the Services department under the Lieutenant Governor was to give protection to the bureaucracy from the 'superintendence' of the AAP leadership. Kejriwal's 'expectations' from the bureaucracy after he became Chief Minister to support his agenda was met with resistance.

In 2015, a very stable bureaucratic set of the Delhi government, which was mentored for 15 years by a very suave chief minister Sheila Dikshit, was rattled by the rabble rousing ways of the new government. Dikshit, being a bureaucrat's wife and having had the exposure of working as a junior minister in Rajiv Gandhi's PMO, understood how to maintain balance that too with some finesse.

SC order on transfers will alone not end CM, bureaucracy logjam

Written by Administrator
Monday, 22 May 2023 06:47

The 15 years under Dikshit saw a flurry of development especially building of infrastructure projects. These needed raising huge funds and their endorsed disbursal, something which her bureaucrats handled. She gave them the confidence of taking the 'right' decisions and also backing them.

On the other hand Kejriwal, as soon as he joined the office, he made it clear that for him manifesto was over and above the codified rules of governance. The message was clear that if there was a resistance to the agenda, the bureaucrats would face music including public humiliation.

This was not hollow threat, it actually happened with AAP cadres locking the office of the secretaries. Faced with embarrassment the bureaucrats rushed to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), which manages their cadre, and sought protection. Thus came the 2015 notification.

Now the question is whether the Supreme Court order make governance any easy for Kejriwal. Looks unlikely, his habit of humiliating bureaucracy, this time announcing removal of the secretary of the Services department at a press conference, has met with resistance. Delhi government has again gone to the Supreme Court saying that the order was not being implemented.

In his hour victory, Kejriwal could have been more discreet and waited for the process of 'delivery and implementation of order' being completed than rushing to make the announcement of transfer. He may finally have his way, get people of his choice posted to various departments but would that be sufficient to make the bureaucracy work like a well-oiled machinery.

There already exists an environment of fear in Delhi government vis-a-vis the probe and arrests made in the money laundering and the excise scam cases. With the Enforcement Directorate and the CBI breathing down the neck, it's very unlikely that even bureaucrats of Kejriwal's choice would want to stick their neck out.

Under the circumstance the Supreme Court ruling may just remain to have academic value, help AAP score some brawny points but no real change in the governance of the city.

SC order on transfers will alone not end CM, bureaucracy logjam

Written by Administrator
Monday, 22 May 2023 06:47

(First Published in The Morning Standard/The New Indian Express)