

Why Delhi Services Bill is timely

AAP lacks maturity on the subject



By Meenakshi Lekhi | Issue Date: August 13, 2023 | Updated: August 06, 2023 08:05 IST

The Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi government's arguments to any action taken by the Central government pertaining to the national capital have become dry as dust. Dealing with the run-of-the-mill false accusation of being unconstitutional by the scared, dry-mouthed opposition has become routine for the government of India.

The latest in the list is the introduction of Delhi Services Bill, which gives power over civil services in the national capital to the lieutenant governor of Delhi. Parliament, as per the Constitutional powers bestowed, can make laws on any subject of the three lists for the Union Territories (UTs), including Delhi and Puducherry. This means that the legislative power of Parliament remains supreme in case of UTs. As per Article 239AA clause three part (b): "Nothing in sub-clause (a) shall derogate from the powers of Parliament under this Constitution to make laws with respect to any matter for a UT or any part thereof.

In the absence of any law, the Supreme Court is well in its jurisdiction to interpret the existing laws. But, when Parliament passes any such law, that shall stand to be the law of the UT.

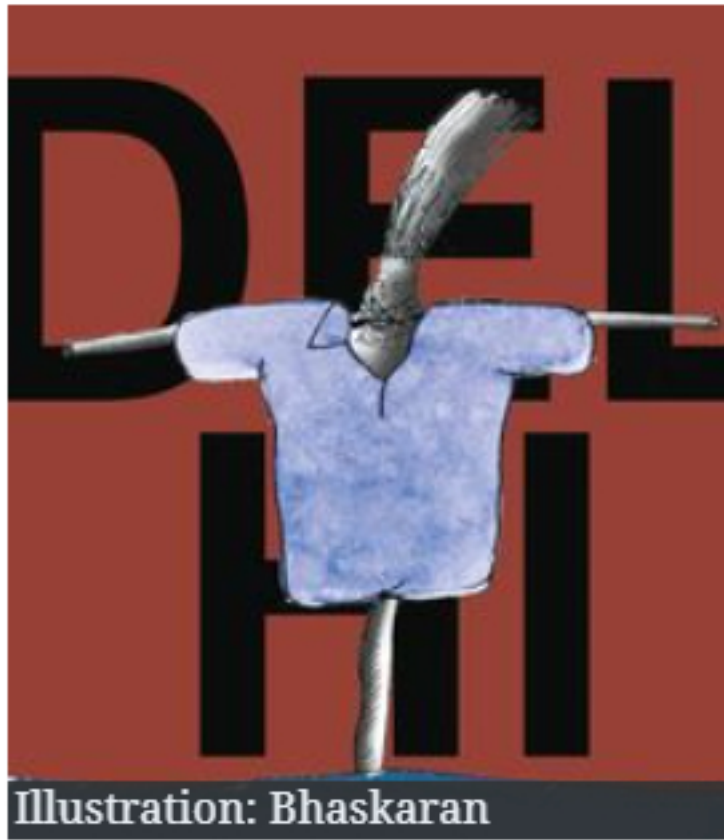


Illustration: Bhaskaran

The aim of the ordinance is to "provide for a comprehensive scheme of administration of services", which "balances the local and domestic interests of the people of Delhi with the democratic will of the entire nation reflected through the president of India".

Delhi National Capital Territory (NCT) may have an elected state government but it also seats an elected Central government. So the Centre has equal right to intervene in matters of importance. It is of strategic importance, especially when India has G20 presidency this year. The Kejriwal-led Delhi government has shown no interest in collaborating with the Central government

for the upcoming G20 meeting in Delhi at the newly inaugurated Bharat Mandapam at Pragati Maidan. Instead, they accuse the Central government for all the problems faced by the people of Delhi. The Centre is in no position to risk its image at a global level when all eyes are on Delhi to put up a grand successful show for the G20 meet wherein representatives of all countries will join us, especially after the water-logging fiasco that everyone witnessed in the past few weeks.

The BJP government has always maintained that political rivalry should not be a reason for administrative lags, but the AAP government lacks maturity on the subject.

It cannot be ignored that Delhi NCT government's efficiency is a big question mark. It has engaged in corruption, non-maintenance and has abandoned its duties. With former Delhi deputy chief minister [Manish Sisodia] in jail in the liquor policy scam, poor management of Delhi floods due to lack of dredging activity in the past few years, potable water crisis in Delhi, excessive electricity bills, the misappropriation of funds in connection with renovation of Kejriwal's residence, wall of a newly built school being tore down, the list of inefficiency on the part of the AAP government does not end.

Kejriwal and his ministers have also been accused of going on a "rampage" immediately after the May 11 verdict of the Supreme Court. The Centre needs to take relevant action in order to safeguard the national interest and also has a special responsibility towards the citizens of Delhi, and hence Delhi services ordinance is one such action taken well in time.

Lekhi is Union minister of state for external affairs and culture.