

Delhi's Political Tussle

What is the issue?

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- The power tussle between the Delhi CM and the Lieutenant Governor (LG) has reached a tense spot.

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- The episode has shown all concerned players (AAP, BJP and INC) in bad light as they've all approached the issue in a politicised context.

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How did the crisis evolve?

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- **Constitutional Position** - National Capital Territory (NCR) of Delhi is kept as a union territory due its strategic significance and logistical convenience.

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- As it is not a full state, the constitutional ambiguities in power distribution between the elected 'CM of Delhi' and Lt. Governor, is causing trouble

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- Notably, since AAP came to power in Delhi, the demand for full statehood for Delhi (with police and other powers), has become strident.

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- AAP government has also had a confrontationist history with the Centre, mainly due to Lt. Governor's interventionism into administration.

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- **Bureaucratic Control** - The tussle intensified when the LG declared that it was his discretionary power to even appoint the Chief Secretary of Delhi.

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- As bureaucracy is effectively in the Union Government's control, the confrontations have resulted in officials becoming uncooperative to the CM.

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- It is said to have reached to a point where officials started skipping official meetings and even stopped attending the phone calls of ministers.

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What is the political context of the crisis?

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 - The immediate provocation for CM Kejriwal to start a dharna at the residence of the Lt. Governor is his government's run-in with the bureaucracy.
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 - Delhi CM's unease with his own government machinery is primarily due to the excessively intrusive actions of the Lt. Governor (LG).
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 - The actions of the Lt. Governor (a central government appointee) is suspected to be guided by the political hawks of the ruling BJP.
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 - Significantly, the Delhi government of AAP is sitting on a brute majority (67/70), and the BJP scored a mere 3/70 in the previous elections.
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 - There is hence a perception that the BJP hasn't come to terms yet with the massive defeat and his acting with a personal vengeance against Mr. Kejriwal.
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 - While Kejriwal could've approached the issue through a lesser corrosive legal and administrative channel, he seems to have choose a street protests.
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 - This method might further his political position, but resolving the crisis that is hindering the fulfilment of the constitutional mandate of the CM is unlikely.
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 - In this context, the Congress Party hasn't even voiced its stand convincingly despite BJP being its arch-rival, due to its intense dislike for AAP.

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How does the future look?

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 - The protests might end soon due to lack of sustainability.
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 - But the underlying causes of the present crisis will not disappear unless the power distribution between the LG and CM becomes clear.

- The Union government needs to get more accommodative of the Delhi government's concerns for the betterment of the people of Delhi.
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- On its part, Delhi government too needs to give up its confrontationist approach and start displaying more administrative prudence.
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- It is also important for the AAP government to realise that it should learn to make the best of the system available before demanding more autonomy.
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Source: The Hindu, Indian Express

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