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Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal Resigns

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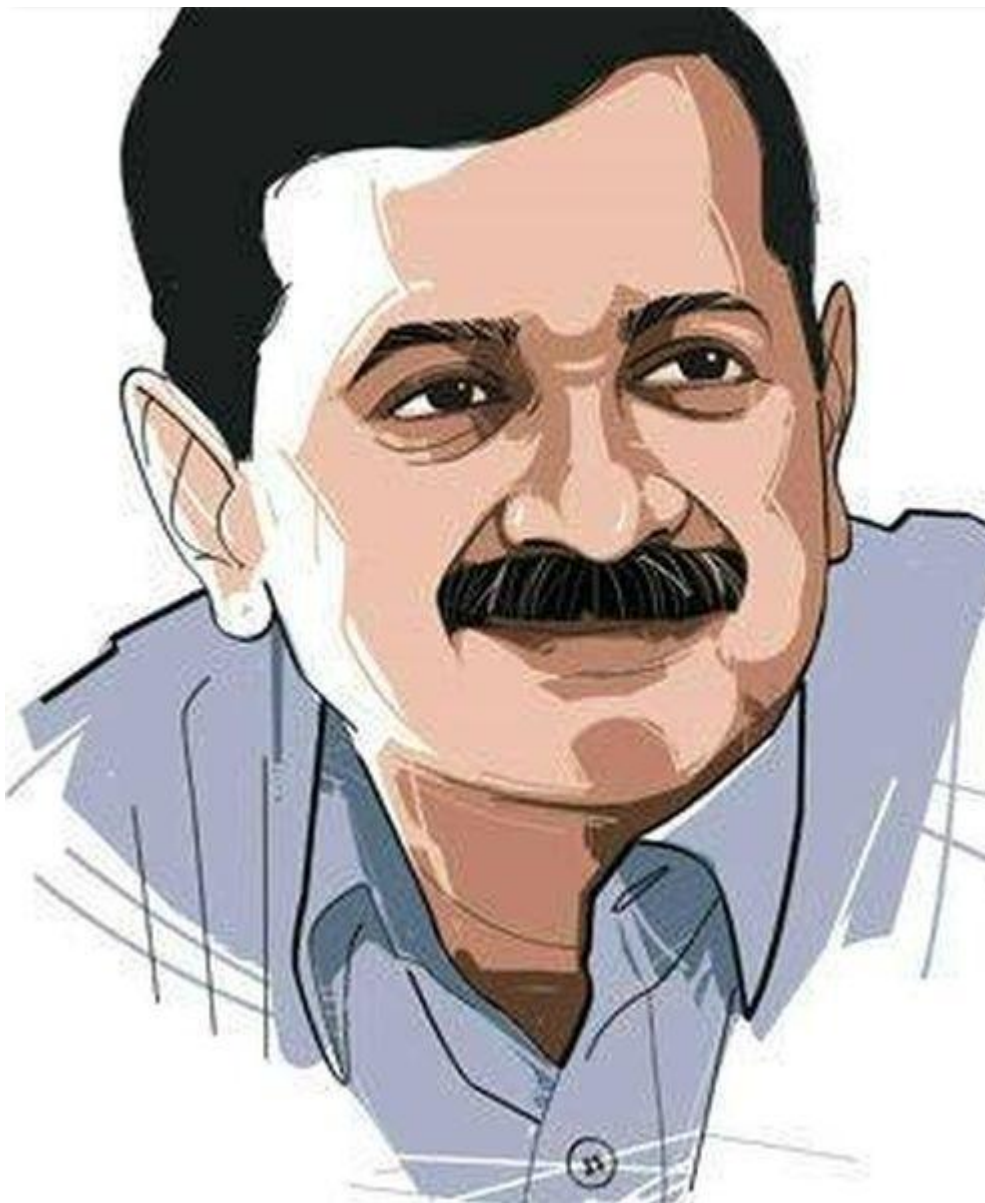


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POLLUTION IN DELHI



Forty-nine days after he took charge of the Delhi government, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Friday resigned following a tumultuous day in the state assembly where combined Congress and BJP legislators “defeated” his party’s attempts to introduce its signal Jan Lokpal bill, which the Aam Admi Pary (AAP) says was meant to curb corruption in high places.

In political embarrassment for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, Kejriwal introduced the bill amid din in the assembly, but an aggressive Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders became strange bedfellows to



of the bill, while only 27 MLAs - all AAP leaders - voted for it. Delhi assembly has a total strength of 70.

As it became apparent that the Congress, BJP and Janata Dal-United legislator Shoiab Iqbal and lone independent Rambeer Shokeen will not allow the AAP government to introduce the bill, Kejriwal and his senior cabinet colleague Manish Sisodia presented two appropriation bills that would empower the government to access funds for expenditure.

Kejriwal then stood up to speak, giving enough indication he was going to resign when he said that this "seems like our last (assembly) session". He said it was more important to "fight corruption than to run a government". "Today, they did not let the Jan Lokpal bill to be introduced. It has been defeated," declared a defiant and gesticulating Kejriwal.

"Whether our government remains in power or not is not important," he said, trying to make himself heard above the din caused by sloganeering and heckling by Congress and BJP legislators.

"We have come here to save the country. If we have to give up the chief minister's post for the sake of the country, we will do it not a hundred times but a thousand times," he said.

Kejriwal took charge Dec 28 at the head of a minority government propped up by the Congress after an astonishing election victory.

Both the BJP, Congress, Shokeen and Iqbal were demanding a discussion on Lt. Governor Najeeb Jung's appeal to the government not to table the bill in the house without his approval.

Jung had earlier in the day written to the speaker on the matter, which had become contentious over the past week with the lieutenant-governor saying that the union



constitutional experts.

But the AAP government was firm and had decided to push for the bill, which was its poll promise.

But much before the house could be adjourned, messages went out to AAP members to meet at its party headquarters at Hanuman Road.

When the three-day session ended in just two days, Kejriwal, without interacting with media, left for the party office. It was here that he announced his resignation. The final decision was taken by the party's Political Affairs Committee.

On Feb 9, Kejriwal had threatened to resign if the bill was not allowed to be passed.

It was an action-packed 49-day stint for the AAP government, which received both bouquets and brickbats for its actions and utterances in its brief and maiden stint in power in a politically-charged journey that began with the party's formation on November 2012.

The party was able to deliver some of its biggest poll promises, including cheap water, power, anti-corruption helpline, audit of power companies and acting on suspected corruption in the organisation of Commonwealth Games and in gas pricing in which he took on from former Delhi chief minister Sheila Dikshit to industrial Mukesh Ambani, chairman of Reliance Industries and India's richest man.

But the indiscretions of one of his ministers, especially Law Minister Somnath Bharti who went after African residents on suspicion of them being part of a drug-and-sex racket, and his nightlong blockade of the centre of the capital, days before the Republic Day Parade, got the party a lot of flak and adverse media attention.

His resignation now sets him free to get back to the streets and do what he knows best - to emot with the



counting to translate his national ambitions.

Political analysts expect Kejriwal and his AAP to make a strong bid for a substantial parliamentary presence in order to be player in the post-election scenario in three months' time. IANS



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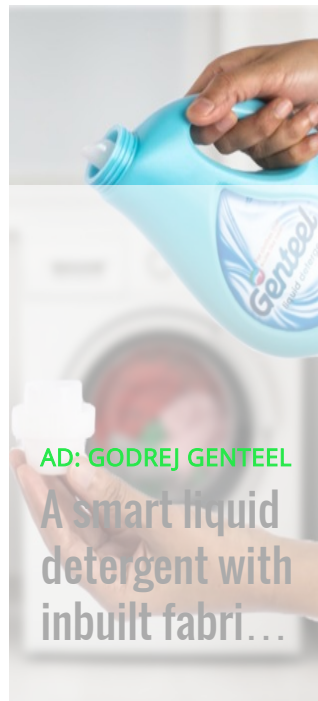
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