



## **UNDERSTANDING THE 26<sup>th</sup> JANUARY AGITATING FARMERS' ASSAULT ON DELHI**

**Some of our well-informed, highly placed friends in the government and the civil society, even amongst the senior police officers, there is a feeling that Delhi Police failed to control the situation that was created by the agitating farmers on 26<sup>th</sup> January, the Republic Day. Perhaps, most of them may not be aware of the complete background and the circumstances that brought about this most undignified and shameful chain of events on the day of our most important national festival, that climaxed with the hoisting of the Nishan Saheb and Farmers' symbolic flags on the rampart of the Red Fort, once the dream of our INA freedom fighters led by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to hoist the national flag here .**

**Directly connected to Delhi Police for nearly three decades holding field assignments in almost all areas, districts to every nook and corner of the 1485 sq .kilometers-National Capital Territory being famaliar with more 100 KMs of the bordering peripheral roads, I am aware of the policing problems in situations of law and order when they occur simultaneously in different parts of this mini-state with its peculiar, albeit, highly complex governance. Anyone who has carefully scrutinized the map of Delhi will understand how difficult could it be to stop, regulate and contain more than 200,000 emotionally charged farm agitators in a do-or-die mood alongwith nearly 35000 tractors.**

**On 26<sup>th</sup> January alongwith my family, Prayas co-workers and the children I happened to be amidst Republic Day celebrations in the outer and North-West Delhi, particularly at Jahangirpuri which falls on one of the roads taken by the farmers who had decided to violate all their 37 conditions signed with Delhi Police they had agreed to abide by. As we learnt about the violence inside the city even close to our function we had to cut short the Program following some of the patriotic songs like 'Ai mere watan ke longon' and dances which the children had prepared liberating themselves from the Corona captivities.**

**By about 2 pm I found the traffic getting disrupted on the Ring Road in West Delhi where I**

was driving towards South Delhi and I had to come down to personally manage the movement of vehicles for sometime which we diverted towards the Delhi Cantonment. The agitators who had been violating the commitments since the previous night on Ghazipur border arrived in the heart of Delhi at the ITO towards the East Delhi and in the North-West as well dismantling the barriers laid by the Police crossing the Singhu and Tikri borders thousands of them heading towards the Central and New Delhi. Their pre-determined targets clearly appeared to be the India Gate the venue of the Republic Day, wherein en-route at ITO Delhi Police held them back through a pitched battle and the Red Fort where they succeeded in achieving their nefarious design.

Whatever happened inside Delhi, particularly in the ITO area i.e. Indraprastha Estate, in Nagloi and at Red Fort, which need not be described since the channels were showing them all live, except certain invisible areas like the rescue of 300 artists majority being the children who were at the Red Fort for the Republic Day celebrations. The media has generally taken a view that the Delhi Police conducted itself with restraint under extreme provocations, meaning thereby that they did not open fire-which appeared to be so likely. Perhaps, they would have been forced to do so in case the unruly mobs with crazy tractors would have gone beyond the ITO area and reached the seat of power -country's most sensitive places like the Parliament House, Rashtrapati Bhawan, PM House etc.

Indeed, with the deployment of nearly half of Delhi Police, 30000 of them at India Gate, the route and venue of the Republic Day parade and the connected programs and arrangements, there was very limited force available to combat the multiple situations and mobs all over. To my mind, given the background and the restive farmers camping for a long time on the borders during winter and hardships, the permission to take out this so-called tractors rally became an opportunity to vent out the anger, which the mobs did using their tractors as armed weapons in the battlefields.

Whoever took the decisions-the Delhi Police or the Home Ministry and the government at the highest levels or the cover of the Supreme Court proceedings giving the farmers permission to block the national highways and arterial roads indefinitely and finally attack the city as they did, in my opinion based on the past experience of some extraordinary-even similar law and order situations of Delhi, permitting the tractors rally in Delhi on the Republic Day was the gravest error. Unfortunately, the Delhi Police has to take all the responsibility and visibly become the only organization to take all the blame though situations might be the direct outcome of the factors far beyond their control.

**Amod K Kanth**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2wUz4Q7ZBw>