

Govt dawdles on law against tardy officers

GOING SLOW Centre in no hurry to finalise bill that will make way for penalising officers who miss deadlines

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NEW DELHI: The NDA government is dragging its feet on enacting a proposed law drafted by the previous UPA regime to penalise civil servants who slip on deadlines for delivering services and resolving grievances of the public.

The bill was drafted at the peak of the anti-corruption movement that led to the formation of the AAP in December 2011 as part of the UPA government's legal framework to fight graft. But the UPA did not get around to pushing the bill in Parliament.

Government sources told HT that the Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of their Grievances Bill of 2011 had not been formally spiked, but the government was in no hurry to finalise it either.

"It is still under examination... There were some key flaws in the bill formulated by the previous government," a senior government official said. The official said there were no directions from the political leadership to expedite the finalization of the bill. "It isn't possible to predict a realistic timeframe," he said.

Officials have been cagey about the UPA's rights-based approach, particularly measures that threaten action against officers who fail to deliver. The Right To Information law was the first to introduce a penalty of up to ₹25,000 for officers for denial of information. The bill for time-bound delivery of services doubled the penalty to ₹50,000.

The reluctance to enact the proposed law is in line with the NDA government's disdain for the UPA's rights-based legislations. "They were happy to make laws and I am happier to remove them," Prime

THE DRAFT BILL

- The Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of their Grievances Bill 2011 sought to create a mechanism to ensure timely delivery of goods and services to citizens
- Every government body across India would have to publish a citizens' charter within six months
- The charter was to detail goods and services promised and deadlines for their delivery
- It empowered citizens to file grievances relating to the citizens charter, functioning of public authority or violation of a law, policy or scheme
- Grievances had to be redressed within 30 working days
- Central or State Public Grievance Redressal Commissions could impose penalty of up to ₹50,000 for failure to render services.

Minister Narendra Modi told a cheering crowd at the Allphones Arena in Sydney last year.

This did not mean that the government does not intend to focus on resolving public grievances or ensuring the efficient delivery of services, sources said.

They pointed out that Modi will run the risk of stepping on a few toes later this month when he directly starts holding video-conferences with chief secretaries to review the tackling of grievances sent to them from New Delhi.