

## Farmers have no alternative to defying Illegal AP Government acts: Dr. JP

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The Federation of Independent Farmers' Associations today charged the Andhra Pradesh Government with contravening Government of India directives under the Essential Commodities Act by banning inter-State movement of fine varieties of paddy and rice.

Addressing a media conference, Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan, President of FIFA and the Lok Satta Party, pointed out that although the Government of India unambiguously stipulated that there shall be no curbs on inter-State movement, the Andhra Pradesh Government has taken law into its own hands by banning sale of paddy and rice outside the State by farmers and tenants. "It is behaving like a street rowdy," fulminated Dr. JP.

"The farmer in India is facing ruin not because of the vagaries of nature but because of the cruel and unjust policies of State and Central Governments. It is the Government that has become an albatross round the farmer's neck," charged Dr. JP.

The State Government itself had removed the barriers on movement of rice and paddy outside the State a couple of years ago citing heavy losses to farmers because of the steep decline in local prices.

Although prices have once again crashed this year against the backdrop of a steep increase in the cost of production, the Andhra Pradesh Government would not permit movement of rice and paddy outside the State.

FIFA is launching a Dandi-like farmers' satyagraha March on February 18 and 19 to defy the unjust laws and regulations that are dealing a body blow to farmers. Farmers and tenants starting from Yemmiganur in Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh will march to Gilkasugur in Raichur district of Karnataka and effect token sale of paddy in defiance of the Andhra Pradesh Government ban. "Let the Government arrest and prosecute farmers and me," said Dr. JP who had given notice of FIFA's action program to the Chief Minister on February 2 itself.

The State Government is blind and dumb in that refuses to see the farmers' plight or listen to wise counsels, said Dr. JP.

FIFA would repeat its defiance of unjust laws and regulations by organizing a similar march from Nizamabad in Andhra Pradesh to Nanded in Maharashtra.

It is time farmers all over the country transcending parties and crops they grow joined hands and demanded dismantling of the present license-permit raj. They should fight Governments but not end their lives in despair, he said pointing out that over 2.3 lakh farmers had committed suicide in the last 15 years.

Dr. JP said that farmers do not get even the minimum support price for any produce, leave alone a fair and remunerative price. The Government, which cannot ensure payment of even the MSP, denies the farmer the freedom to market his produce outside the State. In contrast, an industrialist can sell his manufactured products anywhere he wants. On top of it, he gets a

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subsidy if he chooses to export it outside the country.

The Government harms the farmers' interest by allowing duty-free import of edible oil even as it regulates farm produce exports. The country witnesses a lot of breast-beating whenever prices of onions and tomatoes go up but not a tear is shed when their prices plummet. The State Government which collects hundreds of crores of rupees on marketing of agricultural produce would not utilize the amount to provide warehouses for farmers to store their produce and get pledge loans.

Referring to the grouse in certain circles over his inclusion in a House committee to go into Government land deals, Dr. JP disclosed he had told the Speaker that he would step down to make way for those who feel they are under-represented. He said he had rejected both the ruling Congress and the Opposition TDP during the no-confidence vote because he regarded both parties as wolves fighting for the right to devour innocent lambs. "They represent the corrupt and failed politics of the past. The Lok Satta represents politics of the future and gives hope and leadership to youth," Dr. JP said.

Lok Satta Party Working President Mr. D. V. V. S. Varma and Secretary P. Bhaskara Rao took part in the media conference.