

Lok Satta Party President Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan today expressed his dismay over the State Government's studied silence on policies relating to allotment of lands and mines and liquor auctions in the State budget for 2012-12.

Commenting on the budget introduced in the Legislative Assembly on February 17, Dr.JP recalled that the Supreme Court , in a petition filed by the Lok Satta and others on the 2G spectrum scam, had directed that all natural resources like land and mines, not merely 2G spectrum, be allocated on competitive bidding. Andhra Pradesh which has become the epicenter of corruption in allocation of lands and mines ought to have indicated compliance with the Supreme Court directive. Similarly, the Government did not utter a word on reviewing the present liquor policy which has been ruining poor people's health and finances, besides spawning monumental corruption enveloping elected people's representatives and bureaucrats.

Dr. JP, who is launching a farmers' satyagraha march from Andhra Pradesh to Karnataka in defiance of the ban on sale of paddy and rice outside the State on February 18 and 19, said there seems to be an inverse relationship between Government's words and deeds. The budget devoted long passages to the farm sector even as the Government offered little to rescue agriculture from the present crisis. Andhra Pradesh has the dubious distinction of realizing Rs.2600 crore as revenue, the highest for any State, by way of taxes and cess on agriculture but doing little to promote warehouse construction, or rejuvenating extension services. The Government claims to have spent Rs.74000 crore on jalayagnam so far and brought 16.9 lakh acres under irrigation, a figure much less than claimed in the last budget. There is no attempt at making a cost-benefit analysis.

Dr. JP pointed out that the allocation for school education is much less than the national average. Andhra Pradesh has the lowest literacy rate in southern India. The educational standards are abysmally poor. Although the Government spends thousands of crores of rupees on higher education, only 20 percent of graduates are employable. Healthcare continues to be in a parlous state with even teaching hospitals going without essentials like intravenous fluids.

Dr. JP faulted the Government for not attempting to plug leakages in welfare schemes. He pointed out that the State and Central Governments spend almost Rs.10000 crore a year as subsidy on the public distribution system. The sad fact, however, is that up to 60 percent of food grains meant for distribution to the poor are recycled and flow back to Government warehouses by way of procurement. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, on which the State Government spends Rs.7000 crore a year, is not resulting in the creation of any durable assets.

There is large scale siphoning of funds both under the PDS and the NREGS. Even Central grants are not being utilized properly by the State in crucial sectors. The Gram Nyayalayas Act was enacted in 2009 by Parliament after years of advocacy and struggle by the Lok Satta. Even three years later the State is not utilizing Central funds to start a court in every mandal to ensure speedy justice to the poor. The State is not utilizing Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and Madhyamika

Government silence on land and liquor policies A matter of concern: Lok Satta Party

Written by

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Siksha Abhiyan funds in education because it does not release its share in full. The Janani Suraksha Bima Yojana, the health insurance scheme for the poor, is not utilized by AP. We are losing hundreds of crores of rupees annually because of sheer neglect and callousness.

Dr. JP said the allocation to local governments in the Rs.1.46 lakh crore budget is a mere Rs.675. The Government claims to have spent Rs.20000 crore on power subsidy in the last four years. Yet villages and small industries continue to go without power even to this day.

Dr. JP said that budgetary figures have lost their sanctity as there is a gap of 10 to 17 percent between budget estimates and actuals. For instance, the 2011-12 budget claimed a revenue surplus of Rs.2800 crore whereas the actual figure turns out to be Rs.700 crore.

Dr. JP welcomed the Government's move to computerize all land records and extend e-seva services all over the entire State. The scheme should be fully implemented in 2012 all over the State to end petty corruption and harassment of students, youth and the poor.