

Dr. JP calls for stringent law to punish collusive corruption

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Lok Satta Party national President Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan today welcomed Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's move to bring in a law to punish collusive or consensual corruption involving the corporate sector and public servants.

Addressing a media conference, Dr. JP wanted the Prime Minister to incorporate the suggestions made by the Administrative Reforms Commission, of which he was a member, in the proposed law. The ARC proposed that the law should provide for doubling the punishment in such cases, attachment of properties if there is prima facie evidence, and lay the burden of proof of not being guilty on the accused. The Government should also plan to tax windfall profits arising out of allotment of finite, public resources.

Dr. JP pointed out that under the present dispensation both the bribe taker and the giver are equally guilty of corruption whether it involved Rs. 50 for the issuance of a birth certificate. Punishing the common man who pays a bribe for service which he should get as a matter of right is atrocious. In contrast, corporate entities which corner scarce natural resources like land, mines and spectrum get away by indulging in collusive corruption.

Dr. JP wanted the Prime Minister to dust off the ARC report submitted as early as in 2005 and incorporate its suggestions in the proposed law.

Dr. JP faulted Andhra Pradesh Governor E. S. L. Narasimhan for agreeing to the appointment of Justice Subhashan Reddy as Lokayukta simply because the Government had sent the file a second time after he had rejected it once.

According to the Human Rights Commission law passed by Parliament, the chairman and members of a Human Rights Commission are not eligible for further Government employment once they cease to hold office.

Justice Subhashan Reddy, who had served as Chairman of the Human Rights Commission, is, therefore not eligible for the appointment. The Governor should not have blindly affixed his signature to the Government's proposal since it runs counter to the Central law, which is supreme. Citing a Kerala High Court verdict in support of the appointment would not wash since it is not applicable to the situation in Andhra Pradesh. Dr. JP said his observations are no reflection on Justice Subhashan Reddy who had served as Chief Justice of the Tamil Nadu and Kerala High Courts. He hoped that Justice Subhashan Reddy would take a decision in tune with the spirit of the concerned law and the Constitution.

Dr. JP also took exception to the Supreme Court ruling that Information Commissions should have former judges as its members since it is a quasi judicial body. In all humility, he said, he would like to point out that the judiciary has been transgressing its limits. India is the only country where appointment of judges lies with judges. And now they would like to pack even information commissions with their tribe. Dr. JP said that even officials like a collector, RDO, tahsildar and a station house officer function as quasi judicial officers. Should judges be posted in those offices too?

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Dr. JP asked Chief Minister N. Kiran Kuman Reddy not to use official platforms for launching party propaganda or mounting personal allegations against Opposition leaders. He should appreciate that he is the Chief Minister for all the people of the State and not merely those of the ruling party.

Dr. JP hoped the Supreme Court would prevent Maharashtra from commissioning the illegally constructed Babli project instead of asking the Andhra Pradesh Government to pay Rs.200 crore. Andhra Pradesh should have no problem in supplying drinking water to Maharashtra from the Sriramsagar reservoir. The Central Water Commission could ensure supply of drinking water by Andhra Pradesh in lieu of the Babli project.

Lok Satta leaders D. V. V. S. Varma, Katari Srinivasa Rao and V. Lakshman Balaji took part in the media meet.