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Food Security Bill just an election-eve stratagem: Dr.JP

Lok Satta Party national President Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan today lashed out at the Congress-led UPA Government at the Center for attempting to rush through the Food Security Bill with an eye on general elections.

The Congress, which has ruled the country for more than five decades after Independence, has suddenly woken up to the hunger stalking the countryside, said Dr. JP.

Dr. JP pointed out that States like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh have already been making available food grains to a majority of their populations at the same or less rates than envisaged in the Food Security Bill. Yet, the malnutrition levels in the four States are no less than in other States. MP has 60% children with low birth weight, Chattisgarh 47%, AP 33% and Tamil Nadu 30%. In contrast, Punjab has only 25% and Kerala 23% children with low birth weight, although they do not have food security schemes.

The very fact that one has to pay a bribe of Rs. 3 lakh in cities in Andhra Pradesh to get a fair price shop allotted underlines that the public distribution system is merely lining the pockets of a few but not eradicating poverty.

Dr. JP was addressing media on the occasion of Dr. Mogili Ravi Babu, a dermatologist and cosmetic surgeon belonging to the ST community and his followers, joining the Lok Satta Party.

Dr. JP said that poverty can be eradicated only if everyone has equal opportunities for growth through quality education, healthcare, skill enhancement and employment. It cannot be eliminated through slogans and election-eve sops.

Dr. JP said that the well-conceived National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has failed to produce the anticipated results. Andhra Pradesh, which has witnessed nearly Rs.23000 crore being spent under the scheme since its inception, would not have been facing an acute water crisis had the scheme been utilized to conserve every drop of rainwater.

Advocating decentralization of power and devolution of resources on local bodies, Dr. JP pointed out that leaders like Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad viewed the ensuring local elections in Andhra Pradesh as a means to test the Congress strength and not to better people's lives. Had there been genuine decentralization, naxalism would not have flourished and led to instances like the dastardly attack in Chattisgarh.

Referring to the raging controversy over betting in IPL cricket, Dr. JP asked politicians have no business to dabble in cricket. Like Nero fiddling when Rome was burning, the politicians were indulging in cricket politics instead of focusing on resolving people's burning problems.

Replying to a question, Dr. JP said that people in elected offices against whom a charge sheet is filed in a court of law should resign forthwith. The Lok Satta has been advocating that they

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should be debarred even from contesting elections.

On the sacking of Dr. D. L. Ravindra Reddy from the Andhra Pradesh Cabinet, Dr. JP said that in a parliamentary democracy the Cabinet has collective responsibility. Ministers can have differences with the Chief Minister or the Prime Minister but they should discuss them within the Cabinet but not air them in public.

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister, and the Chief Minister in AP do not enjoy the freedom to function freely. Had they had the freedom, many of the corruption scams would not have been haunting them now at the national level.