Ban on individuals with criminal cases Welcome: Lok Satta Party

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The Lok Satta Party today welcomed the Union Government move to ban individuals named in criminal charge sheets from contesting elections.

Party Working President D. V. V. S. Varma and General Secretary Katari Srinivasa Rao said in a media statement that the 'Decriminalization of Politics Bill' being drafted by the Law Ministry eminently serves the cause for which the Lok Satta movement has been fighting for the last 14 years.

They recalled that the credit for publicizing the names of electoral contestants with criminal antecedents and for making candidates disclose the cases against them in election affidavits goes to the Lok Satta. The Lok Satta as a party too is committed to ridding politics of criminals. It is the only party, which has not fielded any criminals in elections, according to Election Watch.

They pointed out that there are as many as 162 members facing criminal charges in the present Parliament. They belong to the Congress, BJP, CPM and other parties. Even Bihar Chief Minister known for his good governance had to issue tickets to criminal elements.

Mr. Varma and Mr. Srinivasa Rao said that barring criminals from contesting elections is necessary but not sufficient. The Government should simultaneously initiate measures to overhaul political and electoral systems, largely responsible for corruption. There is need for internal democracy within political parties. The parties have to be transparent and accountable in raising funds and spending them. Strangely, there are laws to regulate voluntary organizations but none to regulate political parties, which run the political system, they pointed out and added it is time the Government ushered in mechanisms to regulate them too.

The two Lok Satta leaders suggested that safeguards be incorporated in the Bill to ensure that those in power do not foist false criminal cases against their opponents to block their chances of contesting elections.