

Andhra Pradesh: TDP Government – Promises and performance

On 11th of April this year, Elections were held in Andhra Pradesh to elect state and central governments. In this scenario, let us analyse the promises, commitments and performance of the Telugu Desam Party which came to power in 2014 aligned with BJP.

Now for the 2019 election campaign, TDP and its supremo Chandrababu Naidu are trying to focus around only two issues: capital region development and Polavaram project. He talked less of the agricultural crisis and industrial backwardness and has his complete focus on popular schemes.

Farm Loan Waiver:

Out of the promised Rs. 24,000 crore farm loan waiver, the govt managed to adjust only Rs. 15,147 crore in these 4.5 years. Rs.9,000 crores loan waiver is still pending. It is declaring that it has benefitted 58.29 lakh farmers, including those in the horticulture. Even though they have cleared the loans that are below Rs. 50,000 in the first phase, most of the loans are paid in instalments, directly into the farmer's accounts. This led the banks to put their names in the defaulters list. That is, even before their old loans are cleared, they are doomed into future debts. Telugu Desam rulers failed to take even a single step towards making agriculture crisis free.

There are 32 lakh tenant farmers in the state who are mostly SC, ST, BC and rural poor. 80% of the land under irrigation is cultivated by tenant farmers only. Most of the production is done by them, but still they don't receive the state and central governments' farm loans, input subsidies, loan eligibility cards, farm insurance schemes. They don't even get those benefits doled out during the elections. Because they are not the land owners, they are the land tillers!

While the farmers are incurring Rs. 30,000-35,000 per acre, on every sown crop (chilli, tobacco, cotton, ground nut, subabuletc.), the state and central governments assurances of 9000 and 6000 respectively are just a mockery. In these 5 years, the govt has provided all opportunities to capitalists to exploit the farmers, destroy farming, make farmers debt-ridden and finally commit suicide.

Land reforms and agriculture reforms

As per the orders given to Indian rulers by World Bank and IMF way back in 1996, 40 crore rural population have to be migrated to cities within 20 years. They said that, lands of huge value are in the hands of incompetent peasantry and suggested that they have to be evicted from their land and made into migrant labour. The small peasant economy should be replaced by the contract or corporate farming, thus ran the dictate by the imperialist financial organisations.

Our rulers implemented these orders by setting up SEZs, industrial corridors, export processing zones etc., by grabbing public, private and assigned lands. They started land pooling on an enormous scale in the entire country. The ministry of industry is utilized for this purpose. In many places people revolted against these coercive land pooling. To silence these the then UPA government, in their final year, brought the Land acquisition act, 2013 which has some safe guards for the people.

The Chandra Babu government came up with a new Land acquisition policy claiming to be better than the 2013 Land acquisition act and initiated land acquisition at massive scales. The previous congress government in the state has acquired 1.27 lakh acres of land for SEZs and gave them for capitalists. Acquisitions of land for VANPIC, Coastal corridor, Kakinada SEZ etc occurred during the YSR regime. The present TDP government didn't stop at acquiring land for those pending projects but vastly extended it to all districts. In the past 5 years, Chandra Babu gave orders to collectors to pool 30 lakh acres for the land bank, with a target of at least 2 lakh acres per district. Most of the 30 lakh acres of land bank identified in various districts is assigned land and belongs to the poor.

The produce from the small land holdings is still a significant part of the rural economy. The successive governments are rising the input costs by reducing the farm subsidies, and not providing the minimum support price by withdrawing the public procurement agencies from the market. the peasants are content even if they get their labour costs and are providing the nations population with food security while their stomachs are half-filled. Now the strategy of the capitalists is to further weaken these small tenant farmers and alienate them from their lands.

Concentration of land in rural areas has intensified. Like the reserved forests, reserved lands are coming with new forms. Hundreds of acres are becoming enclosures and are extending under different names like organic farming, medicinal plantations, cashew, nilgiri, subabul, red sandal, sri gandha, Malabar, teak, etc plantations. Huge illegal funds acquired by the Ministers of the ruling parties, MLAs, and bureaucrats and large sums of black money earned by big business houses are being diverted to acquire lands. On the other hand, public properties, resources [sand, clay, granite, banjars, assigned lands, government lands, ponds, etc] at village and mandal level are grabbed and looted on a massive scale with the support of the ruling party and under the shameless supervision of MLAs and ministers.

Way back in 1996, nation-wide funds were provided by World Bank for digitalization of land records. Now the government has made computer registered 1-B as a standard for all land deals including buying, selling, for getting bank loans and for deciding ownership. The rules are so made without taking into consideration the facts at the ground level, that the 1-B's digital rights gives all powers. No rights or guarantees are provided to those poor and weaker sections who are cultivating their lands since ages but doesn't have any official pattas. Further, the purpose of this Digital 1-B is to rob their existing traditional rights. World Bank is the original force behind 1-B computerization. Hitech agents like Chandra Babu woke up early than other CMs in implementing technology for land grabbing. He has a notorious history in such aspects. Even the politically and socially dominant classes are grabbing the lands through unjust and unlawful means.

Industry and Labour

The Telugu Desam party in its 2014 manifesto promised that it will look into all the lands allocated to SEZ's by the previous government, will take back the lands that are not put into use or are illegally allocated and take stringent action against irregularities and violations.

After continuous agitations from the people against the acquisition of thousands of acres of land in the coastal areas of Srikakulam for thermal plants in Sompeta and Kakarapalli, the government has declared that it has stopped the construction of these plants. But till now the lands were not returned to the people.

After the Andhra Pradesh state bifurcation, Visakhapatnam is the only Industrial hub in AP. In Guntur district, cotton, Ginning mills, Ferro alloys industries in Garividi are on their death beds. The historic Jute industries of Srikakulam, Vijaya-nagaram, and Visakhapatnam are under distress due to the negligence of the government. Even though all Jute mills (25-30) in North Andhra are shut down Chandra Babu didn't show any interest to revive them in his entire tenure. In the same way the state government didn't take any responsibility for the agriculture based industries- the sugar mills especially, the cooperative sugar mills.

The once booming employment providers for the rural families, these factories are now doomed to death. Even in this situation also the Chandra Babu government didn't take any concrete steps to protect these factories. No steps are taken to protect agriculture based auxiliary industry like poultry, aqua, dairy etc. No action is taken to protect Palm oil and Solvent industries from monopoly companies. Also there are no protective measures for medium enterprises like Quarry, Crusher and Granite, against monopoly competition. Instead of putting restrictions on monopoly companies penetration and provide employment for workers', it is giving sops to the big corporates.

Pipe dream projects

The government of TDP since its formation after the bifurcation of state is fully engaged in creating euphoria by placating many infrastructure projects as symbols of development. The Chief Minister repeatedly claimed to build a port in each coastal district and an airport in every district and road connectivity with the capital region. It is nothing but putting horse behind the cart. The construction of infrastructure projects does not produce products to be exported or create market for imports. Without any industrial development construction of infrastructure projects will only become white elephants.

The most prestigious road transport system in the entire country, APSRTC's funds are illegally appropriated by the government and a handful of higher officials. They made conflicting agreements with the private transport players at the cost of welfare of the employees and are destroying the APSRTC. These officials are giving thousands of crores worth of prime property of APSRTC located at the centre of every city, at dirt-cheap prices to their kith and kin.

In the pooled lands in each district not even 10% of industries were built till date. This indicates why they acquired such huge lands. The Supreme Court, Parliamentary Committee and CAG looked into the allocation of SEZs and gave their reports. CAG has submitted an in-depth report on SEZs. It clearly stated that the land in the SEZs is being used as private estates by the owners. 90% of the land assigned to the SEZs is vacant. Even though Chandra Babu government is reciting Industry and allocated thousands of crores worth of land to the SEZs, nothing concrete or beneficial resulted from it. It is clear that industry development won't happen by spending hundreds of crores on trips to Davos (WEF) or organizing partnership summits at Visakhapatnam.

Destruction of Small scale Industry

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) which are already on the decline due to competition from the comprador, monopoly companies, got the final blow through the implementation of GST. By protecting the small and medium enterprises we can sustain the local markets, provide employment to the workers and get markets for the rural handicrafts.

International capital and comprador monopoly capitalist forces are hindering national capital, agriculture based industries, small and medium enterprises from sustaining and expanding. Our experience shows that without a political will to counter the monopoly forces, industry and commerce in any country cannot be developed. The policies that protect the national capital will alone lead to the development of local (national) markets, im-

prove the purchasing power of our people and there by industrial development.

The Peasantry and Work force has to unite with the patriotic, democratic, revolutionary forces to fight against the forces of feudal, comprador capital and inter-national capital which are sucking our blood and flesh, by ruining our agricultural and industrial sectors. This is the present task before us

Education

Education from primary to the higher education is put on the altar of privatisation. The primary and secondary schools run by the government are made to languish without the basic necessities not to talk of amenities. Thus even the poor people are forced to send children to the private schools paying exorbitant fees. While the number of universities is being increased they are not being provided even with teaching staff. Even the prestigious old universities like Andhra University are facing financial problems. While the privatisation is being placated as symbol of high standards in technical education, the reverse is the fact of the life. Hundreds of engineering colleges and medical colleges have sprouted up all around the state with the state patronage of fee reimbursement scheme. While the basic sciences and humanities finds no students, technical graduates are competing for the jobs like attenders in banks and police constables. The entire education system has been turned into a profit making industry for private market forces while the youth facing unemployment and society cannot fulfil its needs.

Health

It is the responsibility of the govt to protect the health of all the people and to provide medical facilities to them. Instead, the government completely gave up its responsibility. Though the facilities in govt hospitals are meagre, people are rushing in queues because they are the only affordable sources of treatment for the majority of the people. The amount of money spent from the patients pockets became a measure for the amount of treatment they receive. The state government says it used to spend Rs.5770 per head but has now reduced it by 90%. It says, it has provided treatment to 12 lakh people through Aarogyasri in 4 years, incurring 5330 crores. More than 80% of Aarogyasri cases are handled by private corporate hospitals means more than 80% of Aarogyasri budget is flowing into the hands of private players. Even employee EHS services are diverted to private hospitals. The result is, whenever the government delays clearing their dues (often goes upto 500 crores), they stop providing treatment to the people. i.e. their medical services now became uncertain.

Economy of the State

It became a chorus song for the TDP and its leaders that the state is facing financial problems due to bifurcation. But they never bothered to overcome these problems by solving them in consultation with the centre and Telangana state as the ruling elites at the centre and in both telugu states are interested only in raking up regional sentiments to hide the real situation from the people. Under this pretext, the government of AP is imposing taxes on the people. Before the GST, the commercial tax collections are around Rs. 10,000 crore. During the current year, the GST collections from the state have rising to above the Rs.49,000 crore. Similarly, the revenue from liquor has increased from Rs.11,482 crore in 2014-15 to Rs.17,212 crore, an increase of about Rs.6000 crore. Likewise, the revenue from sales tax on petroleum products has risen from Rs. 3250 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 6586 crore in 2017-18. Thus the tax revenues of the state has increased from Rs.39,907 on 2014-15 to Rs. 65,535 crore in 2018-19. This means that an extra tax burden of around Rs. 14,000 was placed on every person in the state after the bifurcation.
