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**Association of Local Governments in India (ALGI)**

The Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) organized a workshop on the formation of All India Association of Local Governments between 9-11 of June, in New Delhi. The workshop brought together elected members of local governments from 17 states, NGOs working with local governments, activists and representatives from International Union of Local Associations and delegates representing local government associations from Canada, France, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, U.K., Netherlands, Indonesia, Malaysia and Nepal. The workshop was organized to facilitate the process of forming an effective and representative organization of local governments in India.

Senior functionaries of LOK SATTA along with members of the Federation for Empowerment of Local Governments in AP participated in the workshop and shared their experiences and insights with the delegates. The workshop led to the formation of a preparatory committee which is entrusted with the formation of Association of Local Governments in India (ALGI). The delegates elected **Smt Aneez Mirza**, Mayor of Ahmedabad and **Sri R Banerjee**, Sabadhipati of Bardhaman Zilla Parishad, West Bengal as co-chair persons and **Sri T Rajeswara Rao**, Mayor of Warangal, Andhra Pradesh as member secretary of the committee. The

committee is currently in the process of drafting a constitution for ALGI. It was decided that ALGI will have its headquarters in New Delhi with an explicit charter to fight for genuine empowerment of local governments as mandated by the Constitution.

**One Crore (ten million) Signature Campaign**

Many of you are aware that LOK SATTA has embarked on a campaign for local government empowerment in Andhra Pradesh along with the newly formed Federation for Empowerment of Local Governments (FELG). Since its formation in February 2003, many senior leaders of the federation including Sri Chanda Lingiah (ZP Chairman, Khammam), Sri T Rajeswara Rao (Mayor, Warangal), Sri Tulasi Reddy (former ZP Chairman, Kadapa), Sri Ramachandra Reddy (former MP, Rajya Sabha), Sri Sai Reddy (former ZP Chairman, Karimnagar), Sri Venkatarama Reddy (President of AP Sarpanchs' association), Sri Souriah (President of AP MPPs' association) and many other senior functionaries of LOK SATTA have been extensively campaigning throughout the state.

In the month of March, the federation wrote to the chief minister, Sri Chandra Babu Naidu asking him to take concrete measures for empowerment of local governments, specifically on the following issues:

- a) Genuine devolution of power to local governments by transferring all functions, funds and functionaries in respect of the 29 and 18 subjects listed under schedules XI and XII of the Constitution;
- b) Transfer 50 % of state's tax revenues to local governments as untied funds;
- c) Indicate district wise allotments in the state budget;
- d) Creation of local government cadre and transfer all functionaries in respect of the devolved functions to the local government cadre while protecting their current service conditions;
- e) Abolish unconstitutional bodies like District Development Review Committee (DDRC) and Urban Development Authorities (HUDA, VUDA etc.) and in

their place constitute District Planning Committee (DPC) and Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC) as mandated by the constitution;

- f) To create instruments of accountability in local governments, viz. Citizen's Charters for various services with a provision for giving compensation to citizens for delay in service;
- g) An independent ombudsman to act against erring local governments and functionaries.

Unfortunately, there has been no positive response from the government on any of the above issues. In this background FELG and LOK SATTA have launched the "One Crore Signature" campaign on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August (Quit India day) seeking public support and endorsement for local government empowerment. The goal is to obtain the support of 10 million (1 crore) citizens. This will be the largest ever non-partisan mass mobilization in any state on an issue, which is not emotive, and does not have caste or religious overtones.

The campaign took off simultaneously in more than 200 towns, mandal headquarters and cities across the state. Senior leaders of FELG and LOK SATTA are campaigning throughout the state and are mobilizing public support in large numbers. Special effort is being made to reach out to the youth through various colleges and educational institutions.

A massive public education and communication campaign is underway to mobilize support for this crucial campaign. The following communication material has been prepared and distributed in all the 23 districts of the state:

- 800,000 pamphlets
- 300,000 signature sheets
- 107,000 posters
- Slides for display in movie theatres
- CDs and video cassettes for broadcasting on local cable channels
- 4 Radio messages for broadcast on All India Radio
- 7 Video messages for telecast on local TV Channels

The campaign is receiving excellent support from the media and the importance of local government empowerment from citizens' point of view is being highlighted on a continuing basis. Our reports indicate that the campaign is progressing well. We will be intensifying the campaign in the coming few weeks and hope to reach the target of ten million signatures by 2<sup>nd</sup> of October. The press coverage and related information on the campaign can be accessed at [www.loksatta.org/Felg.html](http://www.loksatta.org/Felg.html). The signature sheet can be downloaded from [www.loksatta.org/signature.pdf](http://www.loksatta.org/signature.pdf).

### LOK SATTA Impleads in AP High Court

The fight for genuine local government empowerment is progressing on other fronts also. FELG and LOK SATTA have filed a writ petition in Andhra Pradesh High Court seeking specific directives to the state government on a) measures for effective devolution of powers, b) implement the constitutional provisions in respect of creating District Planning Committees and Metropolitan Planning Committees, and c) mandatory devolution of finances to local governments as per the State

Finance Commission recommendations. We have impleaded ourselves in the writ petition filed by several local government leaders. The petition is being heard by a constitutional bench headed by the Chief Justice of AP High Court. The Attorney General Sri Soli Sorabjee has appeared at the request of the court in his individual capacity and the Additional Solicitor General Sri L Nageswara Rao represented the Union of India while the state government is represented through its Advocate General. As this news letter is going to press, the hearings have concluded and a judgment is awaited.

### Delhi Election Watch

Encouraged by LOK SATTA's successful election watch campaigns (97', 98' and 99') in AP, civil society initiatives in Delhi, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh have come forward to undertake similar efforts for the forthcoming elections to their respective state assemblies.

Delhi Election Watch (DEW) committee has been constituted which met a number of times over the past few months and evolved a plan of action for the campaign. A committee consisting of eminent jurists is being constituted for pre-screening of potential candidates. The following activities are proposed to be undertaken by the DEW committee:

- Survey of voters expectations and performance of candidates
- Pre-screening of candidates
- Know your candidate
- Candidate Disclosure
- State level televised debates
- Go out and vote campaign
- Voter rolls verification

The following prominent organizations/activists are taking an active part in the campaign:

- Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
- Consumer Coordination Council of India (Sri Bejon Misra)
- Centre for Media Studies (Dr Bhaskara Rao)
- Centre for Study of Developing Societies
- Delhi Voters Forum
- Ms Kamini Jaiswal
- Sri K C Sivaramakrishnan
- Sri Kuldeep Nayar
- Lokniti (Dr Yogendra Yadav)
- Manushi (Ms Madhu Kishwar)
- Parivartan (Sri Arvind Kejriwal)
- Sri P P Rao
- Sri Prashant Bhushan
- Sri Promod Chawla
- Justice Rajinder Sachar
- Sri SD Sharma
- Ms Tara Sinha
- Transparency International (Adm Tahiliani)
- Ms Veena Nayyar
- Gen Vinod Saighal
- Volunteer Action Network of India (VANI)

Ms Maja Daruwala and Sri Bibhu Mahapatra of CHRI have done the preparatory work for the DEW initiative and are

coordinating the entire effort. Dr Jayaprakash Narayan interacted with the DEW committee a number of times in the past few months and offered them his guidance and support. Sri Bibhu Mahapatra is also trying to coordinate Election Watch initiatives in Chattisgarh. Whoever is interested in participating in Delhi Election Watch effort can get in touch with Sri Bibhu Mahapatra at [bibhu@humanrightsinitiative.org](mailto:bibhu@humanrightsinitiative.org).

### MKSS Leads Election Watch effort in Rajasthan

As many of you are aware, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), led by Ms Aruna Roy has been at the forefront of the Right to Information movement in the country. MKSS and National Campaign for Peoples Right to Information (NCPRI) have organized a “Workshop on Citizen’s Participation in the Electoral Processes in Rajasthan” on 17<sup>th</sup> of July in Jaipur. The workshop was attended by the CEC Sri J M Lyngdoh, Rajasthan State Election Commissioner, Chief Secretary of Rajasthan and civil society representatives from a few states. Dr Jayaprakash Narayan participated in the workshop and made a presentation on LOK SATTAs election watch efforts and its experiences.

As part of the Election Watch effort in Rajasthan, MKSS and their colleagues have resolved to undertake verification of electoral rolls at the panchayat level and requested the State Election Commissioner to assist them in the process. The State Election Commissioner, in an order dated 6<sup>th</sup> August, directed that voter list verification and revision be intensively undertaken in Ward Sabhas, Gram Sabhas, Resident Welfare Associations, Mohalla Samities etc. and ordered the process to be completed by 15<sup>th</sup> of September, in time for the elections. Whoever is interested in participating in Rajasthan Election Watch effort can get in touch with Sri Nikhil Dey of MKSS at [mkssrajasthan@yahoo.com](mailto:mkssrajasthan@yahoo.com).

### LOK SATTAs partners with Sri Anna Hazare

As you are aware, LOK SATTAs is endeavouring to bring together civil society initiatives, activists and organizations from across the country in its quest for achieving democratic reforms. As part of this effort, Dr Jayaprakash Narayan and Smt Pratibha Rao of LOK SATTAs visited Mumbai and had a detailed interaction with Sri Anna Hazare and his colleagues. Apart from the issue of Right to Information for which he is already fighting, Sri Anna Hazare agreed to take up other critical issues like Local Courts and Citizen’s Charters for advocacy in Maharashtra.

Recently, Sri Hazare went on a fast demanding among other things action against corrupt ministers in Maharashtra government. As part of the agreement with him, Maharashtra government has enacted the Right to Information legislation (which has been pending for a long time) and framed rules for its implementation. This is a magnificent victory for civil society and Sri Hazare.

### LOK SATTAs officiates unique referendum

Sri V Panduranga Rao, panchayat president of Alagadapa, a small village of approximately 5000 population in Nalgonda

district of Andhra Pradesh has decided to seek the people’s mandate on his performance and has held the first referendum in the country. Out of the 3,628 registered voters, 1,789 participated and 1710 voted in favour of the panchayat president. The referendum was officiated by Jana Vignana Vedika, Human Rights Forum and LOK SATTAs. Sri Rao, thanking the people for reposing faith in him said: “I could not perform well due to lack of funds. The chief minister says that he would achieve Swaranandhra Pradesh by 2020. If he gives me a grant of Rs 10 lakhs for our village, I will turn it into Swarnagadapa in just five years”. Sri Rao commented that the referendum should be an eye opener for the state government which is starving the local governments of resources.

### E V Ram Reddi Endowment Lecture

LOK SATTAs/FDR is administering an endowment created in memory of late Sri EV Ram Reddi, a legendary civil servant from AP. The endowment is created to recognize valuable contributions to civil society. The first endowment lecture was delivered by Sri Suresh Prabhu, Chairman of the Task Force on Interlinking of Rivers on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August in Hyderabad. As many of you are aware, Sri Prabhu has a stellar reputation for probity in public life and has done a wonderful job as the Union Minister for Power and earlier to that as Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers. Sri Prabhu spoke on “Democratic Process: Promise vs Performance”.

### FDRI Activities in USA

Foundation for Democratic Reforms in India (FDRI), based in the United States ,has been actively mobilizing support from the Indian community in the United States for governance reforms in India. FDRI has been instrumental in mobilizing institutional support from various organizations like IDS Chicago, IDS Cincinnati, AID Boston, ICA of San Jose, IFA of Los Angeles, TANA Foundation and BATA of San Jose.

### Invited lectures, seminars and workshops

Invited to participate in the International Conference on **Local Governments Association**, organized by Institute of Social Sciences, Delhi June 9-11.

Invited to participate in **Delhi Election Watch** Committee meeting, IIC, New Delhi, June 25.

Invited to address the Senior executives of National Hydro-Electric Corporation on **Power Sector Reforms**, ASCI, Hyderabad, July 2.

Invited to address a gathering of senior officers of the Indian Postal department on: **Potential Role of India Posts in the Electoral Process**, ASCI, Hyderabad, July 9.

Invited to address IPS probationers on: “**Police Media Interface**”, National Police Academy, Hyderabad, July 9.

Invited to participate in a workshop hosted by Centre for Social Development: **First draft of an Agenda for the Nation**, New Delhi, July 14.

Dr Jayaprakash Narayan delivered the Durgabhai Deshmukh Memorial lecture on : **Women, Politics and Power**,

Hyderabad, July 15.

Invited to participate in the **Rajasthan Election Watch Meeting**, Jaipur, July 17 .

Invited to participate in a conference : **Development as Freedom : An India Perspective**, hosted in honour of Sri Amartya Sen, New Delhi, July 31 & August 1.

Invited to deliver a talk on: **Epidemic of Corruption in Health Services**, Institute of Health Systems, Hyderabad, August 12.

Invited to deliver Prof. Bashiruddin memorial lecture on : **Probity in Public Life**, Hyderabad, August 23.

Invited to deliver a talk on **Public Health Systems in India**, Kamineni Hospitals, Hyderabad, August 28.

Invited to address senior civil servants on : **Role of Government in the New Context**, Tata Management Training Institute, Pune, August 29.

Invited by "People for Better Treatment" to deliver the keynote address in a workshop on **Medical Malpractice**, Hyderabad, August 30.

Invited to make a presentation on **Public Governance-Tackling Road Blocks in India** by Indian Merchants' Chamber, at the 4th International Conference on Governance, Mumbai, September 5.

Dr Jayaprakash Narayan delivered Dr Rustam D Ranji Rotary Lecture on **Ensuring a Healthy Future**, Hyderabad, September 17.

Invited to make a presentation on **National Campaign for Electoral and Governance Reforms** at the partners meet of Friedrich Naumann Stiftung Foundation, New Delhi, September 18.

Invited to make a presentation on **Indian Political Dynamics** at the Boeing Global Leadership programme, New Delhi, September 22.

Invited to participate in a pannel discussion on **Can CEOs of corporate India do more than talk about Governance** at the Founder's day celebrations of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Mumbai, September 22.

Invited to address the pannel on **Leading Communities in Change** by Confederation of Indian Industry, at the Leadership Summit, New Delhi, September 23.

## People Behind - Profile of Sri M Rama Reddy

Sri M Rama Reddy has been a life-long worker for the cause of individual liberty, empowerment of local governments and plural democracy. He started his career as an elected local government leader and acquired deep insights into our governance process. Eventually, he founded Samakhya, later re-designated as Cooperative Development Foundation (CDF), to work for creation of an enabling legal environment for cooperatives in India. CDF has evolved over the years into India's preeminent organization in the fields of cooperative autonomy, legal reform and advocacy, training and development. His work convinced him that liberty and autonomy are not isolated concepts, and to preserve them larger democratic reforms in our governance structure are vital. Sri Rama Reddy is the cofounder of LOK SATTA along with Dr Jayaprakash Narayan and is currently a member of its coordination committee.



CDF pioneered the formation of thrift cooperatives in the backward districts of Warangal and Karimnagar in Andhra Pradesh. Currently there are approximately 175 men's and 230 women's thrift cooperatives in those two districts with 93,000 members.

CDF led by Sri Rama Reddy has been instrumental in the enactment of a liberal cooperative law in Andhra Pradesh, which gave an option for the cooperatives to get out of the clutches of government bureaucracy and be their own masters. CDF and LOK SATTA together have been instrumental in stopping the enactment of a restrictive societies law and in the creation of a liberal, progressive and enabling law in its place. For the past few years, CDF has taken up advocacy for liberal cooperative laws in other states. Thanks to CDF's advocacy liberal cooperative laws were enacted in Jammu & Kashmir, Uttaranchal, Bihar, Jharkand, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Orissa and Karnataka. More information on CDF's work can be accessed at [www.sahavikasa.coop](http://www.sahavikasa.coop).

### Your Contributions Can Make A Difference

#### In India

Foundation for Democratic Reforms  
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Punjagutta, Hyderabad - 500082, AP, INDIA  
url: [www.loksatta.org](http://www.loksatta.org)  
91-40-23350778 / 23350790  
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U/S 80 G of the IT Act, 1961  
  
Mrs Pratibha Rao: [loksatta@satyam.net.in](mailto:loksatta@satyam.net.in)

Contributions may be sent to

Cheques Payable to

Address

Tel

Fax

Tax Status

Contact

#### In the US

Foundation for Democratic Reforms in India  
PO Box 469, Wadsworth  
Illinois 60083 USA  
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All contributions are tax deductible