

BJP seeks NMDC lifeline for VSP

- State party chief and other leaders submit a petition to Union Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan with suggestions to better the financial condition of steel plant
- It is suggested that the Centre can work out an MoU between NMDC and RINL for supply of iron ore on cost-to-cost or with marginal profit basis
- In the letter to the Union Minister, State leaders explain the historical, socio-economic significance of the project



AP BJP president Somu Veerajulu, BJP AP co-in-charge Sunil Deodhar and party leaders meet Union Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan at Udyog Bhavan in New Delhi on Monday

Meanwhile, in his three-page letter to Dharmendra Pradhan, Veerajulu said the government should instead work out an agreement between NMDC (National Mineral Development Corporation) and Vizag Steel for supply of iron ore from NMDC at cost-to-cost basis or cost-plus marginal profit basis for next five years. Capital should be infused through IPO (public issue) which would give real valuation of RINL and the Union government should provide sovereign guarantees to raise unsecured loans, he urged.

All options to pursue the revival of RINL should be undertaken instead of condemning the plant to privatisation on the basis of its losses now, he added.

Recalling the long fight Visakha Utku-Andhrula Hakku in the past

and the sacrifices made by the people of Andhra, the state BJP president said the plant was the biggest public sector unit in entire south India. It had brought a metamorphic development in the entire three backward districts of north Andhra Pradesh.

The plant had witnessed an investment of Rs 4,950 crore in three decades but the Centre had secured Rs 43,099 crore in return and the AP state government got Rs 8,565 crore till 2020 in the form of various taxes and duties. That apart, the Vizag Steel had immensely helped in uplifting the living conditions and dignity of thousands of families from socially deprived communities. The overall development of the backward districts became possible in Andhra Pradesh abutting Odisha borders.

He said Visakhapatnam Steel Plant was initially envisaged with an installed capacity of 3 MTPA (million tonnes per annum) in 1992 and subsequently expanded to 7.3 MTPA without any budgetary support from the Centre. All this was despite the fact that the RINL was disadvantageously positioned compared to its rivals vis a vis access to captive iron ore mines thus incurring an additional expenditure of Rs 5,000 per tonne production.

The plant had a land bank of 20,000 acre and losing such a treasure was ill-advised, he argued. More than 60 villages had to be evacuated to acquire land in the past, he said to buttress his point.

Other office bearers of the AP Unit of the party too are signatories to the letter.

HC suspends SEC order on delivery vehicles



AMARAVATI

In a major relief to the state government, the Andhra Pradesh High Court on Monday suspended the State Election Commissioner (SEC) Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar's orders restricting rice door delivery service during the ongoing elections.

The court said the State Election Commission (SEC) cannot stop the government from using mobile delivery vehicles to supply food to the people.

Earlier, the SEC ordered that the government cannot use these mobile vehicles for a period of four weeks, in view of the ongoing rural local bodies' elections.

The SEC personally examined a delivery vehicle to see if these vehicles will allegedly exert any influence on the polls as they would fan out across the nooks and corners of the villages, carrying ration rice for beneficiaries.

Many decisions of Ramesh Kumar are being challenged in the court by the state government and there seems to be no end to the bickering between the state and the SEC.

Earlier, he issued a gag and home confinement order on pan-chayat raj minister Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy which was also suspended by the court but

- Says the State Election Commission can't stop vehicles supplying food to the people
- The SEC earlier suspended ration door delivery vehicles for 4 weeks in rural areas in view of Model Code

Kodali Nani's house motion plea posted to tomorrow

- HC seeks video clippings of Minister's comments
- To appoint a senior advocate as amicus curiae to assist in this case

AMARAVATI

THE AP High Court posted the hearing on house motion petition filed by civil supplies minister Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao (Nani) to Wednesday, February 17.

It may be noted that the State Election Commission (SEC) issued show-cause notice and a gag order on him for his remarks on the commission as well as State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar last week. The SEC also directed the Krishna district SP to register a case on the minister.

In this regard, the minister

filed House motion petition. When the advocates of the both the parties explained their stand to the court, the court observed that the case should be examined in detail and posted the next hearing to Wednesday. The court said that it would appoint a senior advocate as amicus curiae to assist in this case. It ordered the petitioner to submit necessary video clippings. The court also directed the advocate of SEC to submit video tapes of the minister's comments by Wednesday.

The SEC advocate appealed the court to take action after examining the video clippings of the minister's press meet. He said that the minister used objectionable language towards the SEC.

The court observed that it cannot decide on the case without examining the video clippings of the minister's press meet.

case to be registered.

The commission has already successfully completed two phases of rural local bodies elections, even as two more are due.

56,448 pilgrims have darshan at Tirumala

TIRUPATI

THE highest number of 56,448 pilgrims had darshan of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala on Sunday while the common pilgrims availing the free darshan off line SSD tokens have to wait 3 days for darshan with

the rush remaining unabated.

TTD is issuing 22,000 offline SSD tokens for free darshan against 25,000 special entry tickets of Rs 300 daily for darshan. This apart, ticket holders of various Arjitha sevas (virtual), donors including Srivani Trust donors and also Supatham and VIP break.

With the pilgrim rush steadily picking up, the SSD tokens for darshan on Tuesday and Wednesday were already exhausted while tokens for darshan on February 18 up to evening 6 pm slot were also over when reports last came in on Monday.

According to TTD sources the de-

- Common pilgrims availing offline free darshan token have to wait for days for darshan

tails of the pilgrims who had darshan of Lord in the last three days are 48,846 on February 12 which jumped to 54,134 on February 13 and further increased to 56448 on February 14.

IS STEEL PLANT SALE JUSTIFIED?

“The proposal of Union government to privatise over Rs 20,000 crore turnover company - Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), the biggest eco-friendly industry in the entire Southern India, is unfair and unacceptable to the people of Andhra Pradesh. Instead of helping the modern temple to survive, it appears that the Centre has kept an eye on its huge land bank that extends around 22,000 acres. Time has come for Andhra people to show their fighting spirit and save the company from privatisation. Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy should play a vital role in protecting the plant from privatisation. The CM should demonstrate fighting spirit and courage in saving the plant as was done by his father Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy in case of Hindustan Shipyard and BHPV, the oldest industries in Vizag. If the CM succeeds in saving the plant from privatisation, he will remain in the hearts of Andhra people forever.”



K Bangar Raju,
Rtd PR and Communications Senior Executive of RINL

“The Forum of Legal Professionals strongly opposes the proposed privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant by the Union government. Instead of handing over the steel plant to private parties, the focus should be on seeking solutions to help the unit tide over the financial crisis. Government-controlled units like SAIL, NMDC and other mining firms should come together to make do for the shortcomings. The loans taken by the steel plant have to be rescheduled and there must be capital infusion by both the Central and State governments in order to return to normalcy. A holistic approach is the need of the hour. The forum of legal professionals will render all the support to see that the Centre's proposal of privatisation is dropped.”



Kuppili Muralidhar,
president of Forum of Legal Professionals

“There is no need to privatise the Vizag Steel Plant as it has been doing well in recent months. The plant was set up with an objective of strengthening public sector in the country. But now the situation is different with the Modi government gradually stepping aside from the responsibility of developing the public sector.”

G Lalith Bhargav,
contract employee, Tirupati



“That the Central government deciding to privatise Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, one of the Navaratna public enterprises, is unfair. It is not a white elephant to get rid of, but a golden goose which is starved and deserves to be taken care of. It has no own captive mines for uninterrupted supply of raw material. It has been on the path of expansion. So the ongoing losses cannot be shown as a cause to prove it a losing enterprise. It can be turned around into a profit-making entity with a little help and political resolve. Of course, to strengthen the public sector would be the right step in the direction of Atmanirbhar Bharat.”

D D V G Sankara Rao,
Prof of Anaesthesiology, MIMS, Vizianagaram



CM stresses on affordable plots to middle class

- Officials propose construction of ring roads around towns
- Smart township layouts will come up around ring roads
- Govt to start Clean Andhra Pradesh programme with a 100-day action plan to keep the state clean

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy suggested changes in the proposals made for providing infrastructure facilities in smart townships.

In a review on solid waste management and urban housing at his camp office in Tadepalli on Monday, the Chief Minister said the goal was to provide high living standards to middle class people and directed the officials to provide undisputed and clear-titled plots with all the required permissions at affordable prices on non-profit basis to them.

The officials discussed with the Chief Minister several town plans already being implemented in various states and also how to create land bank for the scheme and develop infrastructure.

The Chief Minister said providing plots at affordable prices to middle



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy making suggestions on the proposals on smart townships submitted by officials during review on waste management and urban housing at Tadepalli on Monday

class people is a continuous process and plans should be made to provide plots to eligible beneficiaries as and when they apply.

The officials laid proposals for building ring roads around the towns. The designs of roads should be such that both the government and people who give land for the construction should be benefitted and smart towns' layouts should come up around the ring roads. It was decided initially to develop 18 layouts in 12 towns. The proposals are made for designing smart towns of at least 25 acre to 200 acre, depending on the population of cities and towns. The plan is to prepare the layout within 18 months after works start.

The government will start Clean Andhra Pradesh (CLAP) programme with a 100-day action plan to keep the

state clean. Plans are afoot for NGOs and public participation in the programme which will have 3,825 garbage collection vehicles, more auto tipplers, and over 6,000 bins and waste management systems in municipalities. The Chief Minister said to start bio-mining and there should be change in cleanliness in the state with these programmes.

Municipal and urban development minister Botcha Satyanarayana, Solid and Liquid Waste Management Task Force chairman Alla Ayodhya Ramireddy, municipal and urban development principal secretary Y Sri-lakshmi, municipal administration commissioner M M Nayak, CCLA special commissioner Narayana Bharat Gupta, finance secretary Gulzar, TIDCO MD Ch Sridhar and other senior officials were present.

SEC urged to banish anti-social elements from Kuppam

- TDP chief in a letter to the poll panel points to attempt on life of Congress leader Suresh Babu in Pacharlapalli village
- Demands release of TDP sarpanch candidate and other leaders in Avularipalem village in Krosuru mandal of Guntur district

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MANGALAGIRI

TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday demanded the State Election Commission (SEC) to take step to banish trouble-makers and outside miscreants from the villages in Kuppam Assembly constituency in order to ensure a free and fair panchayat election.

Naidu said that on February 14, an attempt was made on the life of District Congress Committee (DCC) president Suresh Babu at Pacharlapalli village in Gudupalle mandal by a miscreant with knife. The attacker has attacked four other people also when they were trying to protect Suresh Babu. The Opposition leaders were being attacked with an ulterior plan to demoralise them in the panchayat elections, he alleged.

Naidu said that the State Election Commission (SEC) should act swiftly and ensure that the gram panchayat elections being held on February 17 would be conducted peacefully in a free and fair manner. For this, additional protection forces shall be deployed and all the non-bona fide outsiders should be sent out of villages in Kuppam Assembly segment. Simultaneously, inquiry shall be conducted into the presence of anti-social elements and miscreants in villages and action be taken against the culprits.

In a separate statement, Naidu condemned the arrest of the TDP sarpanch candidate along with some others in Avularipalem village in Krosuru mandal in the Guntur district on false charges and demanded their immediate release.

TDP TO STAGE STATE-WIDE STIR FOR VSP ON FEB 18

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MANGALAGIRI

TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday called upon his party leaders and cadres to take part in massive protests all over the state on February 18 to denounce the privatisation of the Visakha Steel Plant (VSP).

Naidu stressed the need for waging a relentless agitation against the ruling YSRCP secret plans in the deal with the South Korean company, POSCO. It was only to save himself from his illegal investments cases that Chief Minister Y S Jaganmohan Reddy was bent on handing over the steel plant to private hands, he alleged. In a statement here, the former

- Party national president accuses Jagan of privatising VSP to save himself from cases
- Alleges that the CM has set his sights on steel plant surplus lands

chief minister asserted that their party would do everything possible to prevent the state government from carrying out its nefarious designs any further. Protest rallies would be organised from village to state level.

He alleged that the Chief Minister had apparently struck a secret deal with POSCO only to grab the surplus lands of the VSP which have got a

very high value in the market. "Out of his unquenchable thirst for personal gains only, the Chief Minister was prostrating before the Centre with respect to the steel plant issue," he said.

Naidu deplored that in the name of privatisation, the steel plant has been weakened without trying for mines exclusively meant for it.

The people of the state achieved the industry after fighting a prolonged struggle in the past. Once again, it was for the whole people of AP to agitate and save the steel plant from all future threats. It was high time to teach a strong lesson to the ruling YSRCP, he said. Naidu said that the VSP was protecting the livelihoods of over 40,000 people directly and another 50,000 workers indirectly.