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Social activists seek cleansing of political system

'It had become a profession with people investing in it to reap huge returns'

HYDERABAD Political parties were adopting strategies to separate the legacies of Mahatma Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh, than uniting their ideologies to make India a stronger democracy, social activists said here on Sunday.

"This is being done as it suits their political interests and such a political system needs to be cleansed," felt Sandeep Pandey, Magasay award winner; Madhu Kishwar, women's rights activist, and R. Desikan, consumer activist.

They were addressing a press conference along with Jayaprakash Narayan, Lok

Satta party president, marking the launch of "Surajya movement" under the auspices of Lok Satta.

Mr. Pandey said political parties had stopped functioning on democratic lines. Some of them had become dynastic and in the case of some others, the decisions were centralised and imposed on people.

Politics was no more a service for the existing political parties. It had become a profession with people 'investing' in it to reap huge returns after capturing power. He complimented the Lok Satta for providing a healthy alternative to people and wanted the hands of Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan and his team streng-

thened.

Mr. Desikan argued that the panchayats were stripped of their powers, and questioned if democracy was still existent in such a scenario. Panchayats cannot even refuse permission to an industry if it was polluting the land and water.

He regretted that caste had become a tool to seek votes and this was the biggest flaw in democracy. He asked political parties to first think of the nation.

Ms. Kishwar appreciated the Lok Satta for integrating the legacies of Mahatma Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh, while other parties merely divided them on casteist and nationalist

ideology lines. She criticised the national political parties for surrendering to parties that promoted regional chauvinism, citing the example of Maharashtra. "How can they call themselves national parties by keeping quiet on such an important development?" she asked. However, she was happy that Lok Satta had a national vision.

Explaining the launch of 'Surajya' movement, Mr. Narayan said it was aimed at cleansing the political system and putting an end to abuse of power and "legal plundering." Every individual should be treated an equal and provided with growth opportunities irrespective of his or her caste or creed.