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Vice President's Secretariat

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**Under Swaraj, no one to be blamed for poor governance but ourselves;**

**Asserts that change must begin with Parliament for radical change in governance;**

**Vice President and union ministers urge States to shed reluctance in empowering local governments;**

**PR Minister Shri Tomar calls for adequate manpower for panchayats for better use of increased fund flow;**

**HUA Minister Shri Puri says poor resource base of cities frustrating and affecting new urban missions**

## **Inaugurates first National Consultation on Strengthening of Local Self Government**

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Vice President of India, Shri M.Venkaiah Naidu and union ministers dealing with rural and urban development today voiced serious concern over less than the desired progress towards empowerment of rural and urban local bodies even after 25 years of legislation by Parliament and urged the States to shed their reluctance in strengthening local governments.

Addressing the first National Consultation Conference on "Swaraj to Suraj: Taking Forward the Governance Agenda" in Hyderabad today, these lead speakers stressed on the importance of effective local governance for better implementation on development and welfare initiatives and for better service delivery. The theme of the first of the six conferences being organized by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) was "Strengthening of Local Governments" on the occasion of 25 years of 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitution Amendments since their enactment by the Parliament. Shri Naidu is the President of IIPA.

Referring to the daunting problems of poor service delivery encompassing primary health, primary and secondary education, drinking water and sanitation, rural roads, electricity, housing, rising

economic inequalities etc., even after 70 years of 'Swaraj', Shri Naidu called for a radical change in governance for which Parliament shall take the lead. He said "It is time to harness all the powers we have within our system. It is time for honest introspection. It is time for turning a new leaf. It is time for a radical change in governance. And that change must begin with Parliament, the State Legislatures and the Local Bodies, the crucibles of democracy".

Expressing his anguish over the events in Parliament and State Legislatures, Shri Venkaiah Naidu, quoting Mahatma said there is no place for violence in legislatures. He said "Let us recall Gandhiji's wise words: No perfect democracy is possible without perfect nonviolence at the back of it. So, let us abjure violent emotions, violent speech and violent actions. Let us discuss, debate and decide in a dignified manner". He urged the legislators to argue with the force of logic and conviction rather than stall the proceedings through brute force.

Stating that he was disturbed the trends of unruly behavior and unparliamentary language in the legislatures, Shri Naidu stressed "We should move away from the current environment of settling scores in which each party adopts the strategy of 'I disrupt because you have done it before. Can we end this spiral? I think we can and we should. Let us make a new beginning".

Reminding the MPs and MLAs of their responsibility of ensuring the accountability of the executive which includes good governance, Shri Naidu said that colonial rulers were used to be blamed for everything going wrong then, there is no such excuse under own rule i.e Swaraj, except blaming ourselves for such things and Parliament needs to emerge as a role model by setting high standards of performance and ensuring good governance.

Dwelling on the issues of local governance, Shri Naidu who is a former Minister of both rural and urban development, urged the local leadership to have political will to mobilise the much required resources by raising taxes and levies by ensuring delivery of quality services. He stressed that 3Ds – Decentralisation, Devolution and Development go hand-in-hand for the prosperity of rural and urban areas and urged the States to ensure transfer of 3 Fs -Functions, Functionaries and Funds to local governments.

The Vice President said that during freedom struggle, some of our revolutionary freedom fighters attempted to throw bombs in legislature to highlight the exploitation by colonial rulers and today, in our own Raj, elected representatives are throwing mikes at the Chair. We fought for and got Swaraj and we fought for Swaraj so that we can move towards Suraj, he added.

Shri Naidu expressed his anguish over creating din, disrupting proceeding, shouting at each other, shouting down others, rushing into well of the legislatures, throwing mikes at the Chair, displaying placards and banners and said that these are a clear demonstration of intolerance to others' point of view and amounts to negation of the spirit of Parliamentary democracy. He further said that Legislative forums are meant for articulation of different points of view for finding negotiated solutions to the problems of the people, the State and the country. He said that in his considered view, resorting to disruption of proceedings in nothing lies than 'HIMSA' or 'VIOLENCE'. Are we true to Bapuji who gave us Swaraj, he questioned.

Stating that negative thinking, harsh words, harsh deeds - all of these amount to Himsa or Violence, Shri Venkaih Naidu questioned how can we afford such negative thinking, harsh words and deeds in our own Legislatures? Legislatures have the responsibility of ensuring the accountability of governments at various levels, he added.

The Vice President said that how can the elected representatives make governments do their job, if they don't do their job properly? He further said that ensuring Suraj under Swaraj, the real change has to happen in the functioning of our MPs and MLAs and Assemblies, Councils and the

Parliament. He said that he had been the Minister in the Centre for both rural and urban development.

The Vice President said that rural and urban local bodies are far from becoming really the institutions of Self Government that was intended under 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, made 25 years ago. He further said that even after 25 years, the national capital Delhi still does not have a Metropolitan Planning Committee. Why this neglected, he questioned. He further explained that own resources of our Urban local bodies amounts to only 0.50% of our GDP, while it is as high as 6% to 14% in countries like Germany, Spain, Australia, UK and the USA. We are now independent for over 70 years, but we are suffering from serious Governance deficit remitting and particularly, disseminating against poor, he added.

The Vice President opined that to build a new India from the bottom, the only way is to make local governments empowered, effective and functional. I hope today's Consultative Table will throw new light in this regard, he added.

The Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Shri Narendra Singh Tomar said self reliant and effective local governments are critical for building a New India and referred to the good work being done by village panchayats in making rural areas Open Defecation Free. He stated that Rs.2,00,292 cr are being transferred to villages during 2015-20 as against only Rs. 60,000 cr in the previous five years, Shri Tomar urged the State Governments to ensue adequate administrative staff for village panchayats for effective utilization of these rising funds. He also called for improved accounting and reporting systems at village level for better monitoring of use of funds.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep S Puri while referring to poor resource base of urban local bodies noted that “devolution of finances to urban local bodies makes a frustrating experience and this is adversely impacting the implementation of new urban missions. Over the years, there has been a steady encroachment on the assigned functions and revenues of local bodies by specialized agencies of the State Governments. This resulted in weak non-performing and ineffective local bodies adversely impacting implementation of new urban missions. Concerted efforts are now being made to shore up their capacities. The need of the hour is financially viable urban local bodies”.

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