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Chiru blasts previous governments

Suresh Krishnamoorthy

— PHOTO: P.V. SIVAKUMAR



STRIKES A CHORD: Praja Rajyam president Chiranjeevi speaking at Polepalli on Friday.

Polepalli (Mahbubnagar dist.): Praja Rajyam (PR) president Chiranjeevi on Friday launched a trenchant attack against the previous governments for not considering the interests of farmers while establishing Special Economic Zones (SEZs).

Expressing concern over the plight of farmers displaced by the Pharma SEZ here, he said, "While SEZs are essential as they spawn industrial development, it cannot be done by depriving poor farmers of their land." He said that as many as 56 out of 250 SEZs in the country were in Andhra Pradesh and it was regrettable that they were carved out by taking fertile lands from poor farmers. "It is not real development when it is achieved at the cost of hungry stomachs."

Mr. Chiranjeevi spent over three hours in the area where the government has acquired about 1,000 acres in Polepalli, Mudireddipalle and Gundlagadda Thanda in Jadcherla mandal for the Pharma SEZ in 2001-02 where two companies were putting up their facility and only 153 acres was in use. He also visited the houses of three displaced families.

Addressing an impressive gathering from atop an Innova under a blazing sun, the actor-turned-politician drew applause when he stated that farmers had become labourers after acquisition of their land. He said farmers cherished the small piece of land that they could call their own and were so sentimental that elders would be buried in a corner of the holding.

Asserting that his party would stand by the displaced farmers led by the Polepalli SEZ Vythireka Samiti (Struggle Committee Against Polepalli SEZ), he demanded that the government allocate alternative land and houses to them, apart from paying an additional sum of money in tune with the rising land prices. Farmers who lost their lands were not reaping the full benefit considering that allocation of SEZs invariably led to a real estate boom.

Without naming the Telugu Desam and the Congress, he said it was a pity that the governments were overlooking the interests of the farmers and blindly going ahead, giving away large tracts of land in the name of industrial development. "When PR comes to power, we promise that SEZs and development will be so integrated that none can point an accusing finger," he said amid slogan-shouting by the people.

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