

Nation-wide strike illegal: Venkaiah Naidu

- Special Correspondent

Union Minister M. Venkaiah Naidu said the country-wide strike called by 10 central trade unions was illegal and against people's interests.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Press Information Bureau's Regional Editors Conference on Friday, Mr. Naidu said the government had taken many pro-poor and pro-worker initiatives and that most issues had been sorted out. For the first time, the minimum wage enhanced to Rs. 350 and the statutory bonus had been increased, he said. "If the economy improves, there will be further employment. For that, we need production, not obstruction," he said, asking parties who had a political agenda in this to revise their approach in the future.

On the Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi's remark on the RSS and the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, Mr. Naidu said the Congress was sounding like a "stuck gramophone record". "This is a tried and failed experiment. These are baseless allegations. The Congress has been consistently inconsistent on everything," he said.

On the special category status to Andhra Pradesh, Mr. Naidu said the Finance Ministry was in touch with the Andhra Pradesh government.

Mr. Naidu had earlier participated in the Tiranga Yatra where videos of Ministers visiting various parts of the country to pay tribute to freedom fighters were screened and a cassette with a song rendered by ghazal singer Srinivas released. Mr. Naidu said many people did not know many freedom fighters and this was an attempt to bring in as many people as possible. He said he had received feedback about it; any misses would be incorporated. The video had English commentary but the song was in various languages, including Tamil.

A photo exhibition of freedom fighters was also conducted.

Addressing the press a little later, he said the country should draw spirit from the Tiranga Yatra, and societal harmony and patriotism should be rekindled.

Siruvani issue

Tamilisai Soundararajan, State president of the BJP, speaking to the press at the event, said the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had sent several letters to the Tamil Nadu government on the Kerala government's proposal to construct a new dam across the Siruvani and had asked for Tamil Nadu's stand. "But the Tamil Nadu government failed to communicate its stand," she said.

She also said that while announcements such as the nine-month maternity leave for government employees were welcome, the state of law and order in Tamil Nadu was a question mark. Also, there are 20,000 vacancies in the police department, she said. "We were expecting an announcement on this and on other issues such as temple land encroachment, but these were not made," she said.
