

Clarification on Telangana related findings

The publication of the findings pertaining to Telangana in the CNN-IBN “State of the Nation Poll,” undertaken by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and presented by *The Hindu* (“Rating the governments,” August 12, 2011), has evoked strong interest and intense reactions — which is natural for a passionately contested issue such as this one. The CSDS has been accused in some quarters of carrying out a flawed exercise, with a bias against the movement for a separate Telangana.

Such an impression arises partly from a misreading of the survey findings. Our survey clearly shows that within the Telangana region nearly two-thirds of those who have an opinion support a separate State. Since 2004, when the CSDS started asking this question in Andhra Pradesh, the support for a separate State has increased consistently within the Telangana region. This basic finding cannot possibly be read as propaganda against a separate Telangana. The survey also found that there still is a small section of people within the region (more in Hyderabad and some other districts) who do not support this demand, and that the level of opposition to Telangana in the rest of Andhra Pradesh is even stronger. We have no reason to disbelieve these findings.

Some of the suspicion about the survey findings arises from external facts. The “State of the Nation Poll” was coordinated in Andhra Pradesh by Pemmasani Narsimha Rao (as was mentioned on August 8 in *The Hindu*, CNN-IBN “State of the Nation Poll ” in a “Note on Methodology”), of Nagarjuna University, Guntur. He has been associated for long with CSDS surveys and has in recent years led the Andhra Pradesh team which has acquired a formidable reputation for professionalism and integrity. Of late, in his personal capacity he has been the honorary convener of the Joint Action Committee for United Andhra Pradesh. Since the survey was carried out by students from Nagarjuna University, the headquarters of CSDS surveys in the State for well over a decade, most of the investigators that went to Telangana were from Seemandhra, though some field investigators did hail from the Telangana region. These two facts did not seem very relevant to this survey, since this was a nation-wide poll focussing on corruption, price rise and leadership. There were only two questions on Telangana (out of over a hundred) in this survey.

We have no reason to believe that the political convictions of our coordinator, or the composition of the survey team, compromised the quality of the data on the Telangana question. Our preliminary internal consistency checks on the data do not reveal anything unusual. Field reports from the investigators who went to Telangana drew attention to an unfortunate tendency to censor independent research: our investigators were physically thrown out from two Assembly segments (Mahbubabad and Ibrahimpatanam), and their work was disrupted elsewhere too by pro-Telangana activists. We have come across no evidence of any wrong-doing on the part of the investigators.

Given the high credibility that CSDS surveys enjoy, it is of utmost importance that we are, and are seen to be, absolutely fair in recording public opinion. Given the charged political context that prevails in the State, we should have anticipated that the affiliation of our coordinator and the composition of our team would lead to distrust among those advocating a separate state. Presentation of the survey findings on Telangana without addressing these legitimate apprehensions was possibly an error of judgment. We would therefore carry out an independent verification of these survey findings and report the findings to

the public within the next two months. The CSDS team remains committed to transparency and accountability in its surveys and is willing to answer any question related to this survey. We shall also place on our website (www.lokniti.org) all the relevant details regarding the survey in all the regions of Andhra Pradesh.