The Lok Satta Party today took serious exception to the call for bandhs in Telangana and Andhra on the issue of the State Public Service Commission holding preliminary examinations for recruitment to Group I services on September 5.

"It is an issue that cannot and should not be decided on the streets," Lok Satta Party spokespersons Katari Srinivasa Rao and P. Bhaskara Rao told a media conference. Such obstructionist forms of agitation will merely accentuate the trend among industrialists to flee the State. The State's rate of growth has already slumped below even the national average, not to talk of certain advanced States.

On the demand from certain sections for reservation of 42 percent of Group I posts for people from the Telangana region, the Lok Satta leaders said they could not be faulted for voicing the demand but they should realize that they should achieve their objective through constitutional means. The Constitution guarantees equality before law and equality of opportunity to every one and expressly prohibits discrimination based on caste, race, religion, language, gender, place of birth and residence. At the same time, it provides for making laws prescribing requirements of residence for public employment.

Considering the special circumstances prevailing in Andhra Pradesh, Article 371(D) of the Constitution prescribes district as a unit for recruitment to posts below the first gazetted level, the zone as a unit for the first gazetted level posts and the State as a unit for the second gazetted level posts. The State is the unit for recruitment to Group I posts for which examinations are scheduled for September 5.

The Constitution provided for the constitution of State public Service Commissions and gave them independence and protection to ensure they functioned objectively and impartially.

The demand for regional reservations in State level posts should be accomplished through Constitutional means and not by enforcing general shutdowns, said the Lok Satta leaders.

The Lok Satta Party leaders deplored that a Constitutional body like the Public Service Commission has been dragged into an unsavory and unwarranted controversy. Those harboring grievances against either the Chairman or members of the PSC have again to fall back on the Constitutional process for their removal.

They said that successive State Governments have diluted PSC credibility by not appointing persons of integrity and competence and by interfering in their day-to-day functioning. By turning to Government for advice and guidance, PSCs, which should zealously guard their autonomy, have undermined themselves. A service commission which wants the Government to tell it when it should conduct or not conduct an examination is merely abdicating its Constitutional responsibility.

The Lok Satta leaders recalled that in recent years, 38 percent to 45 percent of Group I posts are going to candidates from the Telangana region. The process will merely accentuate in the

years to come as Hyderabad has become the intellectual capital of the State. A simple issue is blown out of proportion for short-term political gains.

They regretted that the debate on public employment has touched new lows. Public employment is about the public and not employees. Employment is a means to serve the public and not for personal enrichment. Wrangling for appointments in “lucrative” departments like revenue, police, excise, transport and commercial taxes as if public employment is private property is tantamount to condoning corruption, they added.