

# POLITICS OVER POLAVARAM

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

The Polavaram irrigation project. | Photo Credit: BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The [inundation of Bhadrachalam town](#) due to recent floods in the Godavari has thrust the Polavaram project into the limelight again. The issue has led to a war of words between the two Telugu States with Telangana Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar claiming that the Andhra Pradesh government's move to increase the height of the project by three metres led to the floods and posed a grave threat to areas upstream in Telangana and A.P. Minister Ambati Rambabu asserting that the project had been cleared by the Central Water Commission (CWC) and was being constructed by the Central government with the A.P. government only implementing it.

The Polavaram project has been a bone of contention between the two States since the formation of Telangana. The then A.P. government succeeded in getting seven mandals of old Khammam district merged with A.P. with the Centre enacting the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill in 2014, because these mandals were in the submergence area of the project and the government could take relief and rehabilitation measures when necessary. Telangana alleged that the project works were expedited after it was declared a national project in line with the Act and that serious concerns of the riparian States were ignored.

The Telangana government has insisted on taking up new studies relating to the impact of the backwaters as well as the environmental impact the project would have on areas upstream. The government's demand is not inappropriate. The environmental assessment of the Central government in 2005 had considered 36 lakh cusecs as the probable maximum flood. This was then changed to 50 lakh cusecs, and the CWC asked the A.P. government to design spillways accordingly.

The change in the design of spillways to discharge 50 lakh cusecs has compounded the problem. The Telangana government contended that the fundamental principles and assumptions forming the basis of the agreement between Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and then united A.P. on the design and flood operation schedule of Polavaram had been replaced by new parameters and this was a cause of concern. "The studies are conducted for 36 lakh cusecs and not for 50 lakh cusecs which can cause heavy submergence and disaster upstream," the State said in a presentation made to the Parliamentary Standing Committee. It said no studies had been carried out for successive floods in Godavari. The extent of submergence due to design flood and the backwater effect along the Kinnerasani, Sabari and the Sileru limbs (flowing through Chhattisgarh and Odisha) had not been considered by the CWC by estimating flood contributions from the two tributaries separately in conjunction with simultaneous floods likely to occur in Godavari. "If any inflow more than 20 lakh cusecs occurs before the recession of the earlier flood, it will have more impact on the backwater level compared to normal flood condition," the State said to the Standing Committee.

Telangana has therefore said it is imperative for central agencies to study the backwater levels with revised probable maximum flood and corresponding backwater levels. It contended that the environment clearance given by the Union Ministry of Environment on October 25, 2005 was valid and operative only up to October 24, 2010 and so, a fresh assessment was required.

As the issue has the potential to snowball into a major controversy between the two Telugu States where governments are focusing on development after overcoming the initial bifurcation hassles, it is time for the Central government to constitute a team of experts to examine the

concerns of the riparian States and allay apprehensions.

rajeev.madabhushi@thehindu.co.in

[Our code of editorial values](#)

**END**

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com