

# CAPITAL VERDICT: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON A.P. HIGH COURT JUDGMENT ON AMARAVATI

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Judiciary in India: its Structure, Organization & Functioning, Judges of SC & High Courts, Judgments and related Issues

That policies change with governments may appear acceptable in a democracy, but no court will allow a transformation so fundamental that rights and entitlements that accrued during an earlier regime are abandoned or frustrated. In 2014, the [Amaravati region was chosen as the site of the capital of Andhra Pradesh](#), the residuary State left after the creation of Telangana, but work was stopped after the present YSRCP regime took over. Instead, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy mooted the idea of 'decentralised' development, by which he meant that the State will have Amaravati as the legislative capital, while Visakhapatnam will be the executive capital, and Kurnool the seat of the High Court. In a stern rebuff to the 'three capitals' idea of the present regime, a Full Bench of the State's [High Court has ruled that it cannot abandon the project to develop Amaravati as the capital city](#) after over 33,000 acres had been given up by farmers and 15,000 crore sunk in it over development expenditure. Holding the State government to its promise of developing the region into the capital city, it has directed the government to complete the required developmental work in Amaravati within six months. As a consequential relief to the farmers who had given up their land for the specific purpose, the court has asked the State and the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority to develop the surrendered land and deliver reconstituted plots to them within three months.

In political terms, the decision to locate the three organs in different cities was possibly motivated by a wish to undo a key policy measure of the previous TDP regime, as well as negate speculative gains the erstwhile rulers may have allegedly made by choosing Amaravati. However, it was projected as a measure to decentralise governance and take the fruits of development to all parts of the State. After farmers approached the court, the government sought to render the matter infructuous by repealing its decentralisation law, the one that it enacted in 2020 for spreading the capital city and proposing 'inclusive development' of all regions. However, the Bench took note of the government's intention to pursue its multiple capital cities plan and decided that it will adjudicate on the petitioners' grievances. It held that the State legislature lacked the competency to shift the organs of the State. The verdict, if undisturbed by the Supreme Court, may put an end to attempts to shift the capital city out of Amaravati. A welcome feature of the verdict is that it has invoked the doctrines of constitutional trust and *promissory estoppel* to prevent a regime from going back on its promises to citizens. It sends out a message that governance should not be buffeted by winds of political change or be held hostage to the passing whimsy of a particular regime.

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