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In troubled waters, Polavaram voters continue to wait for project completion

Conceived in 1941, the project has a history of more than eight decades but eludes people even today; the ruling YSR Congress Party, and the Opposition Telugu Desam Party and its alliance partner Jana Sena Party have vowed to complete the project if voted to power in the May 13 poll

GROUND REPORT

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Amid the elections in Andhra Pradesh, the Polavaram water project has taken centre stage with the parties including the issue in their manifestos and promising to complete it if voted to power.

Both the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and the Opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and its alliance partner Jana Sena Party (JSP) have vowed to complete the project and set deadlines as well. The BJP did not release any State-specific manifesto, though it is an alliance partner of the TDP-JSP in Andhra Pradesh.

From the Ramapada Sagar project conceived in 1941 to Polavaram, the project has a history of more than eight decades but eludes the people even today. The ruling and Opposition parties, the State and the Centre resort to blame game and mudslinging over inordinate delay in its completion. Even as rehabilitation and resettlement (R&R) is yet to be completed, the fate of the project hangs in the balance as a portion of the diaphragm wall was washed away in the 2019 and 2020 floods. It is still unclear how to



A long wait: The Polavaram R&R colony at Taduvai in Eluru district of Andhra Pradesh. A total of 371 habitations in composite East and West Godavari districts were affected due to the project. K.V.S. GIRI

proceed further on the diaphragm wall, and construct the main dam, the earth-cum-rockfill structure.

Now, the elections are slated to be held on May 13, and all eyes are on the Polavaram Assembly constituency, though it may not be a referendum on the governments or parties in the fray. The general mood of the public is that the TDP and YSRCP governments have played with the sentiments and lives of people, while the BJP at the Centre too is to blame. They have a reason: the R&R package is yet to be taken to a logical conclusion. A majority of Polavaram evacuees/

project displaced families (PDFs) did not receive compensation and alternative houses were not provided to them.

Compensation not paid

Both displaced tribal and non-tribal people recall that compensation was not paid to many of them though land was given to tribal people. They also recall the blame game between the YSRCP and the TDP and promises made by YSRCP president and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy during his visit to Polavaram. Mr. Jagan Reddy promised to pay a compensation of ₹10 lakh per family, higher than the

₹6.86 lakh promised by the TDP government. But, neither ₹6.86 lakh nor ₹10 lakh was paid, they point out.

The YSRCP government said that the previous TDP government in its five years had paid compensation only to 3,073 persons and released ₹193 crore, while the Jagan Reddy government, in its three years, paid more – ₹1,773 crore to 10,330 persons. If it were the scene, for whom do they vote? The people, more particularly PDFs, in the constituency are divided, clueless, and have no other option. "On the one hand, we are receiving the benefits under various wel-

fare schemes, on the other hand, the government has failed to pay compensation, complete housing and fulfil other obligations," says Nagaraj, a voter.

A total of 371 habitations in composite East and West Godavari districts were affected due to the project, and more than 1.05 lakh families were affected. As many as 23 villages in Polavaram mandal were vacated and villagers were shifted to the R&R colonies. For the PDFs from Velerupadu and Kukkurur mandal, the R&R colonies were constructed near Jangareddygudem town, which comes in the Chintalapudi Assembly segment under the Eluru Lok Sabha constituency. More than 22,000 families were to be relocated at Challavarigudem (Taduvai colony). The government failed to complete all the houses. Interestingly, the housing for Rudramkota villagers, which submerges once the project was complete, did not start.

Most of the houses constructed for non-tribals were not occupied, and only about 300 families opted to shift to Taduvai Colony. Also, more than 1,300 people have preferred retaining their old address on voter IDs. "We are afraid of changing the address as we lose the nativity in Polavaram," says a

senior citizen, who is relocated from Velerupadu.

Pouring out their woes, the residents point out that there were no proper roads and basic infrastructure. Only one RTC bus plies – once in the morning and again in the evening. The schools and hospital which were promised remain on paper. The R&R Colony falls under the Chintalapudi Assembly constituency. Leave alone the Eluru Lok Sabha constituency candidates, neither the Chintalapudi Assembly candidates nor the Polavaram candidates visited the colony so far. "The political parties are least bothered about evacuees. To whom do we have to vote? Why should we vote?", is a big question before them.

Andhra Pradesh Samagrabhividdhi Adhyayana Vedika convenor T. Lakshmi Narayana says lack of political will was one of the main reasons for the inordinate delay in the completion of the project.

Tribals are a majority with nearly 1.25 lakh voters, and Kapus, Kammas, and OBC communities together account for around one lakh voters. The Polavaram Assembly constituency is set to witness an intense battle of the ballot.

Andhra Pradesh will witness simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections on May 13.

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The Tribune- 07- May-2024

Summer pangs: Villages around Kasauli without water for days

AMBIKA SHARMA
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

SOLAN, MAY 6

Even as the summer is yet to fully set in, several villages around the popular tourist town Kasauli in Himachal's Solan have already started facing a potable water crisis. The authorities have been blaming the sparse winter

25,000 AFFECTED AS 15 SCHEMES DRYING UP

■ Tap supply being received after four days instead of the routine alternate day arrangement

■ Nearly 15 schemes have started drying up and 25,000 residents have been affected

■ The affected areas include Kasauli, Parwanoo, Dharampur, Jabli, Koti, Garkhal and Taksal

rain, which has resulted in an alarming decline in the discharge from natural sources.

As the Jal Shakti Department has been forced to take

up water rationing, about 25,000 residents have been hit. The tap water supply is now being released after three to four days instead of

the earlier arrangement of alternate days.

Jal Shakti Department Sub-Divisional Officer (Dharampur) Bhanu said the

local supply schemes had been affected as hardly any rain was received over the past six-seven months. "Nearly 15 schemes have started drying up. The water discharge has fallen by 50 to 60 per cent in areas around Kasauli and Parwanoo, including Dharampur, Jabli,

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Summer pangs: Villages around Kasauli without..

Koti, Garkhal and Taksal. The little rain that was received in April helped rejuvenate the natural sources a bit and the supply is expected to last till May-end," the Sub-Divisional Officer said.

Bhanu said 7.2 lakh litres of water used to be lifted daily from a scheme in Dharam-

pur, but the discharge had declined to 2 lakh litres.

The residents of several villages have started buying water through tankers despite its quality being a cause for concern. More than 550 cases of diarrhoea, a water-borne ailment, have already surfaced in Parwanoo.

There have been reports of tanker suppliers lifting water from 'nullahs' and 'khuds', which are a potential source of contamination due to the lack of any mechanism to check the quality of water. The delay in commissioning the Rs 102 crore Giri potable water scheme, meant to augment

supply to Kasauli and its suburbs, has aggravated the crisis.

Funded jointly by Jal Jiwan Mission (Rs 56 crore) and the National Bank for Agriculture Development (Rs 46 crore), the project's tender was awarded in August 2021 and the scheme was to be completed by July 2023.

Amar Ujala- 07- May-2024

एनजीटी की सख्ती : स्टेडियमों में बंद करें भूगर्भ जल का इस्तेमाल

क्रिकेट मैचों में एसटीपी जल ही उपयोग में लाने के लिए अंतिम चेतावनी
अतुल भारद्वाज

नई दिल्ली। राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण (एनजीटी) ने क्रिकेट मैचों के दौरान स्टेडियमों के रखरखाव के लिए भूगर्भ जल की बर्बादी पर सख्त रुख अपनाया है। देश के 22 स्टेडियमों व बीसीसीआई को अंतिम चेतावनी दी है कि सिर्फ शोधित जल (एसटीपी) का ही इस्तेमाल किया जाए। एनजीटी पहले ही केंद्रीय जलशक्ति मंत्रालय को इसके लिए नीति बनाने का आदेश भी दे चुका है।

एनजीटी के अध्यक्ष जस्टिस प्रकाश श्रीवास्तव, सदस्य जस्टिस सुधीर अग्रवाल, डॉ. ए सैथिल वेल के आदेश में कहा गया है, यह तथ्य सामने लाया गया है कि बिना एनओसी लिए क्रिकेट स्टेडियम भूगर्भ जल का अंधाधुंध उपयोग कर रहे हैं। स्टेडियमों में वर्षा जल संचयन प्रणाली भी नहीं लगाई है। इससे बारिश का पानी भी भूगर्भ जल के रिचार्ज में उपयोग नहीं होता। एसटीपी के शोधित पानी के उपयोग के लिए भी

तीन सप्ताह में देना होगा जवाब

एनजीटी ने सभी स्टेडियमों को तीन सप्ताह में जवाब देने का अंतिम मौका दिया है। एनजीटी को एक स्टेडियम प्रबंधक ने बताया कि नौ माह से एनओसी के लिए उनका आवेदन लंबित है। इस पर एनजीटी ने कहा, यह काम राज्य एवं केंद्रीय भूजल प्राधिकरण का है। प्राधिकरण अपने यहां लंबित अर्जियों का निस्तारण कराएं। इसकी रिपोर्ट भी एनजीटी को देनी होगी। अगली सुनवाई 13 अगस्त को है।

काम नहीं हुआ। 22 में से सिर्फ नौ स्टेडियमों ने ही अभी तक जवाब दाखिल किए हैं।

बंगलूरु में रोज 80 हजार लीटर पानी बर्बाद : जल संकट के बीच बंगलूरु स्टेडियम के रखरखाव पर रोज करीब 80 हजार लीटर पानी खर्च होता है। बंगलूरु वाटर सप्लाय बोर्ड की रिपोर्ट में बताया है कि 64 हजार लीटर शोधित पानी भी उपयोग में लिया जाता है।