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Int'l team inspects Polavaram site

AP CM Naidu has held previous YSRC govt responsible for delay in completing irrigation project

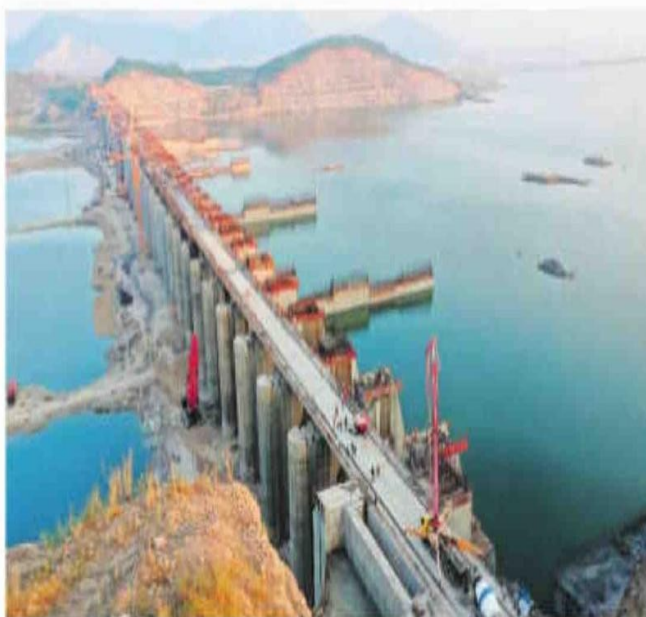
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Vijayawada

A team of international experts visited the Polavaram Project site on Sunday as part of their four-day visit to assess the problems with the diaphragm wall, guide bund, and cofferdams. After studying the structures in depth, they will submit a report to the Jal Shakti Ministry.

Four experts -- David P Paul and Gain Franco de Sikko are from the US, and Richard Danielle and Sean Hinch Berger from Canada -- arrived in New Delhi on Saturday. According to the Central Water Commission (CWC), all four individuals are experts in international dam safety, structural engineering, structural solutions, civil engineering, hydraulics, and geo-technology engineering.

Following a briefing from the officials of the Jal Shakti Ministry about the project, the expert team arrived at Rajamahendravaram on Saturday night, and commenced their inspection of the Polavaram project on Sunday.

The team is expected to stay



The team will advise on whether D-walls parallel to the damaged portion should be constructed or a new D-wall should be built. The estimated cost for building a new D-wall is around ₹1,000 crore

Andhra Pradesh govt official

at the project site till July 3. On the first two days, the experts will study the project design and ongoing works in detail. On the remaining two days, they will hold review meetings with officials working on the project, CWC, Polavaram Project Authority, CSMRS (Central Soil and Materials Research Station) and executing agencies to assess the situa-

tion. The Central government invited the four experts on receiving a request from the State government for assistance in issues pertaining to the reconstruction of the D-wall. The team will advise on whether D-walls parallel to the damaged portion should be constructed or a new D-wall should be built. The estimated cost for building a new D-wall

is around ₹1,000 crore.

Following his visit to the Polavaram Project, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had released a white paper on June 28 and squarely blamed the YSRC president and former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for the delay in completing the project. Naidu attributed the damage caused to the D-wall and the leaks in the cofferdams to the "ignorant decisions" taken by the previous government.

He had stated that changing contractual agencies and transferring experienced officials during the execution of crucial works on the upper cofferdam resulted in a gap in the project, which further proved fatal during the floods in 2019 and 2020.

Naidu opined that the gap in the upper cofferdam should be plugged before the flood season. However, due to changes in contractual agencies and officials, no work was done. In the subsequent floods, about 35% of the Diaphragm wall was badly damaged at four different places.