

Telangana Leaders Gave Walkover to Seemandhra Lobbyists

By Gautam Pingle – HYDERABAD, New Indian Express

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The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, as it now is, creates more problems, intended or unintended. It is a clear result of Seemandhra lobbying and vested interests in the bureaucracy. The drafting is a disaster and everlasting shame to the Union home and law ministries and other known and unknown scribes.

Common High Court: The government refused to set a date for the division of the High Court. Asududdin Owaisi moved an amendment to create two separate high courts immediately. It was negated. One can expect trouble with lawyers and judges to continue affecting the credibility of the court.

Owaisi's also moved an amendment to create a Telangana Public Service Commission Immediately, instead of depending on the Union Public Service Commission, but it too was voted down.

Common Capital: The Bill allows the GHMC area as a common capital for 10 years. This is ridiculous, but Telangana leaders agreed to this. Asududdin Owaisi moved an amendment to restrict the common capital to Khairtabad mandal for two years. It was defeated 235 to 6 votes.

Common Governor: The Bill sets a common Governor who will be privy to both State Cabinets' decisions and can seek files from both governments and is expected to be independent and neutral. Even worse, he will also have special authority over law and order in Hyderabad. This is unconstitutional and will be challenged. Asududdin's amendment to have separate Governors and to put Hyderabad law and order absolutely under the Telangana Cabinet was lost by 24 to 169 votes.

Telangana Assembly Polls: The Bill as drafted earlier postponed Telenagana Assembly elections for at least a year using the peculiar demand for extra constituencies. On intervention by Jaipal Reddy at the very highest level, the proposal is deleted from the Bill.

Government Employees: Where allocation of government employees was concerned, the option of the employee will be final. Asududdin Owaisi moved for inclusion of the criteria of opinion, nativity, domicile and seniority, instead of just option. His amendment was lost, but the government amendment changed the operative phrase to “in consideration of option received from the employees”.

This leaves Seemandhra and Telangana employees to fight it out in the Partition Commission and in courts for years to come.

Common River Boards: After the Assembly returned the Bill, the Cabinet decided to give away 397 villages of Bhadrachalam to Seemandhra. After it was pointed out that the threatened villages were fewer, the Cabinet reduced the number to 134 in a second meeting. As if this were not sufficient, another clause was added saying: “The consent for Polavaram project shall be deemed to have been given by the successor State of Telangana!” To compound this further, yet another amendment removed the need to consult the two successor states. Thus, they took away the villages, ensured no consultation was required, and to prevent the Telangana CM from objecting in the apex committee of river boards, deemed his prior consent by legislating it! Unconstitutional and undemocratic!

Asududdin Owaisi moved an amendment that PranhitaChevella project be made a national project and to remove the three Krishna projects in Telangana from restrictive purview of the Bill. He also moved to ensure the central pool would make up Telangana power deficit. All failed.

Public Debt and Pensions: Telangana leaders wanted the allocation of pensions to be based on nativity and service in the region for employees, and public debt on project and scheme specific outcome. However, only Asududdin Owaisi moved the necessary amendments, which were negated.

Common Educational Quotas: Clause 97 has extended the provisions of Article 371D to the new state of Telangana, which can now apply for a fresh Presidential Orders. But Clause 95 of the Bill freezes the entrance quotas for all educational institutions for 10 years. This conflicts with Presidential Orders to be issued. After protests, a government amendment added the proviso: “In so far as it is provided under Article 371D of the Constitution”. This clarifies and confirms that Clause 95 is subject to Presidential Orders under Article 371D. A small victory.

Common Corporations: The Bill deals with 89 state corporations, which make up the state sector. Clause 71 enables the Central Government to issue directions “regarding the division of the interests and shares” and directorships between the successor states.

It does not provide (as in other Acts) for dissolution of old and setting up of new corporations till one year. Thus, the same corporations will now be run with Seemandhra-Telangana boards.

Telangana gets the Singareni Collieries Company, but with conditions. Asududdin Owaisi moved unsuccessfully to restrict the coal linkages and allocations by Singareni to non-Telangana power stations to a period of three years.

Common Institutions: There are 107 institutions which will continue to remain in common ownership for a year or till the successor states agree to divide them. Asududdin Owaisi wanted the division to take place immediately. He lost the amendment.

Verdict: This Bill is full of injustice and stupidity and it is a Seemandhra mess. Jaipal Reddy has worked behind the scene. Asududdin Owaisi tried in the Lok Sabha to rectify the matter. He failed in the face of the CongressBJP front. The Act will maintain and increase the acrimony and disputes between the Telugu peoples for another decade. This time, the fight will be between two states. Is that something to be satisfied with?
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DR GAUTAM PINGLE
13, PINGLE VENKATRAM BAGH
BEGUMPET
HYDERABAD 500016, INDIA

Telephones: +91-40-6456 0304 +91-40-6456 0304; +91-40-4017 3050
+91-40-4017 3050

Mob: +91-98496 39689 +91-98496 39689
E-MAIL: gautam.pingle@gmail.com

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