

## Telangana minus Hyderabad is recipe for disaster

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Hyderabad city is in centre of the Telangana region. If it becomes Union Territory, its revenue will be transferred to the Government of India and not Telangana. Protesters shout slogans while demanding a separate Telangana state, in Hyderabad earlier this month.

PTI the smart money says that Sonia Gandhi has decided to try and retain the 17 MP seats in a new Telangana state in alliance with the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) in the 2014 general elections. The other alternative was to try for the total 42 MP seats from a united Andhra Pradesh against the combined Opposition efforts of the YSR Congress Party and the Telugu Desam Party in Rayalaseema-Andhra ("Seemandhra") regions, with the TRS sweeping the Telangana region.

Her decision seems sensible, given that her main interest is the survival of the Congress in power. However, now that Sonia Gandhi has decided finally to bite the bullet, the satraps in Andhra Pradesh and representatives in Delhi are trying to continue to extract what they can from the Seemandhra lobby by suggesting to her half measures in the process of Telangana state formation.

One half-measure is for Hyderabad city to become a Union Territory (UT). This will safeguard the Seemandhra illegal land grabbers and other vested interests — irregular building permissions, regularisation of illegal construction, relaxation of floor-space conditions, master-plan violations, etc. Most of these lands that have been illegally grabbed have been hypothecated to banks at huge fictitious values, which will collapse when the truth about their illegality surfaces. Anyway, most of the leading lights in the Seemandhra business are near bankruptcy, with their company's share prices falling by 70% or so and their loans and interest burden exceeding their capacity to repay them.

Hyderabad city is in centre of the Telangana region and constitutes its main growth engine. The net revenues generated here may amount now to over Rs 10,000 cr annually, based on the figures for 2005-06 given to the Assembly. So the game plan is to deprive Telangana of its Hyderabad revenues, transfer them to the Government of India when Hyderabad is made a Union Territory, and receive the money back from the Centre to build capitals for Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra regions and finance other "development projects" there. This is an idea similar to that motivating the merger of Telangana with Andhra state in 1956. As Karl Marx would put it, a case of history repeating itself, first as tragedy, then as farce.

Hyderabad as a political entity will have to depend on its water supply, road and rail communications on Telangana. All its solid waste and liquid waste will have to be disposed of in Telangana. With the Telangana movement in the mood it is, blockading a UT like Hyderabad will be child's play — the Centre will have to mount an airlift like the Berlin airlift of 1948-49 to keep Hyderabad going and even then it will be without water and power and stinking to high heaven.

The Srikrishna Report recommended only two alternatives: a united state and, if that is not possible, Telangana with Hyderabad as its capital. It did not recommend any of the other four options it put forward including an expanded Hyderabad as a UT. Regarding that Hyderabad as UT with 11% of the AP population it said: "about a sixth of Telangana's GDP comes from Hyderabad" (p.308). This indicated how vital it is for Telangana's future.

Everyone seems to have forgotten our Muslim brothers and sisters in Hyderabad City who constitute a decisive section. The Majlis-e-Ittehad ul Musaleem (MIM) has already come out against this idea, for it will be doomed as a political party if Hyderabad becomes a UT. Today their man is the mayor of the City. UT status will effectively disenfranchise them and leave them with no voice in managing their own affairs. A lieutenant governor and IAS/ IPS officers of the UT cadre will rule.

Till now the only serious violence has been the unfortunate self-inflicted deaths of more than 600 young men for the sake of Telangana. That tragedy, terrible as its consequences were to their families, should give politicians room for serious thought. It illustrates the passionate commitment to Telangana statehood. If this is not enough to show the deaf and dumb, the Telangana March on 30 September where nearly 2-3 lakh Telangana supporters assembled in Hyderabad should show even the blind the depth of the movement. This mobilization occurred even after the police blockaded all access to Hyderabad by rail and road and arrests were made all over the region of Telangana activists and supporters.

It does not bode well with politicians and lobbyists playing games with emotions of 40 million people. Passions aroused can, in frustration, turn on the nearest and most visible neighbours and this may end up in agitation against Seemandhra persons living in Telangana. To part, yes; to part peacefully, even better; but not to part in anger and violence. Politicians should beware of outcomes they do not intend to precipitate by their ill-considered actions.

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