

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
(MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS)
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 788
TO BE ANSWERED ON 23.07.2018

TRIBALS AFFECTED BY POLAVARAM DAM

788. SHRI BALABHADRA MAJHI:

Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has submitted report / recommendations to the Government on the plight of tribals affected /displaced by the Indira Sagar Polavaram Project in Andhra Pradesh and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Commission has visited all affected areas / States;
- (c) if so, the details thereof along with the authorities who were consulted by the commission in this regard; and
- (d) the details of reference issued by the Government to the Commission along with the other steps taken by the Government to mitigate the suffering of affected tribals of the area?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS
(SHRI JASWANTSINH BHABHOR)

(a) to (c) National Commission for Scheduled Tribes under the Chairmanship of Chairperson, NCST visited few villages and met Scheduled Tribe persons / families affected on account of Polavaram Irrigation Project in Andhra Pradesh on 26th to 28th March, 2018. Thereafter, the Commission met the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and other Senior Officers dealing with the Project. Based on the interaction with the Polavaram Irrigation Project affected people, the Commission prepared a Special Report which comprises important features of Polavaram Irrigation Project, details regarding land acquisition and rehabilitation and resettlement, issue raised in the various representations received from the project affected people and the Commission's recommendations / advises for better rehabilitation and resettlement of the project affected Scheduled Tribes families. The Commission submitted the report to the Hon'ble President on 03.07.2018. Recommendation of the Commission is at Annexure.

(d) The Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation vide their order dated 12.09.2017 has constituted a Committee headed by Secretary (Tribal Affairs) for exclusive monitoring mechanism for Polavaram Project at National Level. The Terms of Reference of the said Committee inter-alia includes to ensure finalization of traditional community and individual forest rights of tribals and villages in the forest area of the Polavaram project in coordination with Agencies / Authority implementing Rehabilitating and Resettlement activities of the project.

ANNEXURE REFERRED IN REPLY TO POINT (a) to (c) IN RESPECT OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 788 DATED 23.07.2018 ASKED BY SHRI BALABHADRA MAJHI, HON'BLE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT REGARDING 'TRIBALS AFFECTED BY POLAVARAM DAM'

RECOMMENDATIONS / ADVICE OF THE COMMISSION

(i) The Commission, while interacting with affected Scheduled Tribe people was informed that in many cases, the alternative land given to them in lieu of the acquired land is not cultivable. Either it is rocky terrain or there is no water. The Commission, therefore, recommends that the State Government should provide only land fit for agriculture to PDFs/PFs within the command area of Polavaram Irrigation project with proper irrigation facilities.

(ii) The Commission noted that many ST people without land holdings were also shifted. They were hitherto depending on minor forest produces for their livelihood. Now, they are shifted and deprived of their livelihood. The State Government needs to take care of them by providing alternative means of livelihood.

(iii) When the Commission visited Iddikulakotta village, complaints were received stating that in that village, many newly constructed houses were destroyed due to flash flood and so far the destroyed houses have not been re-built. The Commission recommended that the destroyed houses should be re-built immediately to mitigate the sufferings of ST people.

(iv) The compensation packages in respect of Polavaram Irrigation project need to be revised on suo-moto basis by the Government of Andhra Pradesh keeping in view the observations and modalities suggested by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in Special Leave Petition (SLP) NO. 6933 of 2007 in the case of Mahanadi coalfields Ltd Versus Mathias Oram and others. The Commission feels that a similar Scheme as per the above Supreme Court order will help the Scheduled Tribe people affected by Polavaram Irrigation Project as their right to fair compensation. Further, the provisions of the Right to Fair Compensation, Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act be kept in mind and used to the advantage of the Tribals in the best possible manner.

(v) While awarding compensation in respect of tribal people, "land for land" policy should be followed to the maximum extent. In this regard, the ceiling of 2.5 acres of land should be waived in case of ST people, and they should be provided equal or at least 2.5 acres of land within the Command Area of the Polavaram Irrigation Project.

(vi) In the resettlement colonies, focus/emphasis needs to be given for creation of social infrastructure like setting up of Colleges, University, Stadiums, Medical College on the pattern of AIIMs, Art and Music academies/centers, etc. in addition to their entitlement. The State Government Should make adequate provision of land for creation of such infrastructure facilities through outright purchase, if necessary.

(vii) The State Government should consider the entire rehabilitation and resettlement work is undertaken through R&R Commissioner as single point responsibility as well as accountability for R&R, while the actual implementation can be undertaken by other line departments/agencies.

(viii) The State Government must ensure that R&R work is completed and compensation paid to the project affected as well as project displaced families at least four months prior to submergence or commissioning of the project or their displacement, whichever is earlier.

(ix) The State Government should consider developing an industrial estate/hub adjoining the resettlement area to provide employment and economic opportunities to the displaced families. Both the State Government as well as the Central Government should consider declaring this industrial estate as tax free with a tax holiday for 10 years. There should be a condition that only the displaced people from the Polavaram Irrigation Project will be given employment for non-managerial jobs in this industrial estate.

(x) The Commission apprehended that once the dam project is physically completed and affected people are shifted to new places, the concerned R&R officials will be transferred to new responsibilities and it is likely that the people rehabilitated will be left to their destiny and will have to fend to themselves without any supporting institutional mechanism. Commission, therefore strongly recommends that there should be a dedicated team of R&R officials to be stationed in rehabilitation area to oversee the developmental activities and other welfare measures for a period of at least 5 years from completion of the project.