

Stop Polavaram work: CM

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BHUBANESWAR: Chief minister Naveen Patnaik has sought the Centre's intervention to halt work on the [Polavaram multi-purpose project](#) on river Godavari in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, official sources said.

Naveen, who is currently visiting New Delhi, told Union minister of water resources Harish Rawat on Friday that the project work is continuing despite the matter being sub-judice and the Union ministry of environment and forests issuing 'stop work' order.

Referring to various media reports on finalisation of tenders by the Andhra Pradesh government for civil works of Polavaram project, Naveen said there are a number of critical issues pertaining to the project, including reservoir operation schedule, placement of embankments, submersion of forest land, displacement of tribal population and incorrect backwater computation, that are pending, an official release informed. He suggested the Union government not to allow execution of the project till these conflicting issues were resolved through mutual consultations, it added.

Rawat said he has called a meeting of the irrigation secretaries of Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh to discuss the issue. "Odisha has raised certain objections. This is not a new project. Andhra Pradesh has already invested. There are some technical issues. We will try to resolve them," Rawat told mediapersons after the meeting.

The Odisha government has been opposing the project on the ground that it would submerge over 2,100 hectare of land having more than 13 tribal villages in Padia block of Maoist-affected Malkangiri district. It has also objected to Andhra not taking it into confidence while finalizing the project and even redesigning it for holding 50 lakh cusec of floodwater as against the initial capacity of 35 lakh cusec. It moved the Supreme Court in October, 2007, demanding, among others, stopping construction and canceling the environment clearance granted to the project.

Naveen further requested Rawat to expeditiously release Rs 563.15 crore due to the State under various schemes, including the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (Rs 445 crore), Command Area Development and Water Management Programme and Repair, Renovation and Restoration Scheme, before March 31-end.

Stating that a number of factors, including law and order problems in Maoist-affected areas and delay in forest and environment clearances, had adversely hit execution of 11 major and medium irrigation projects in Odisha, the CM urged Rawat to extend the time limit for completion of these projects. Rawat said the state government should submit a detailed

proposal for seeking extension of time for 11 ongoing major and medium projects, specifying the reasons for delay in their execution in the KBK area and in extremism-affected areas, to enable the Union ministry to recommend extension in relaxation of the latest guidelines.

Reacting to Naveen's request for approval of the balance 440 projects under Repair, Renovation and Restoration of Water Bodies Scheme, sanctioned in April, 2010, the central minister said the proposal will be sanctioned after the approval of the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) on continuation of the Scheme during the 12th Five Year Plan.

Rawat said his ministry was pursuing with the ministry of finance to release funds for Kanupur and Anandapur barrage projects and also assured that he would recommend release of funds for three other projects, Upper Indravati, Telengiri and Subarnarekha. For Ret project, the Union ministry has sought the investment clearance from the Planning Commission, he said. He also assured Naveen that the Central Water Commission would be asked to expedite the proposal to release Rs 6.07 crore under the Flood Management Programme.