



## The Big Picture - Multiple State Capitals & Governance

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The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly passed the **AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Bill, 2020**. The Bill intends to give shape to the **state government's plan of having three capitals** — executive capital in Visakhapatnam, legislative in Amaravati and judicial in Kurnool.

- According to the government, multiple state capitals will allow the development of several regions of the state and hence leading to inclusive growth.
- However, previously the Andhra government had acquired around 30 thousand acres of land approximately from the farmers in and around the Amaravati region. So the decision of changing the capital may affect most of the farmers living out there.

Apart from it, Andhra Pradesh government has reportedly **decided to scrap the state's Legislative Council.**

## Multiple Capitals in a State

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Several states in India have separate judicial capitals i.e. their High Courts in the different districts rather than in their state capitals because of the historical reasons. For example, in Uttar Pradesh, while the state capital is Lucknow, the High Court is at Prayagraj. Similarly, in Madhya Pradesh, while the state capital is Bhopal, the High Court is at Jabalpur and in Gujarat, while the state capital is Gandhinagar, the High Court is at Ahmedabad.

## Multiple Capitals: Concerns

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- **Separation of executive and legislative capital can be challenging.** In the Parliamentary system of government, which has been adopted in India, functions of the executive and the legislature are closely connected. For example,
  - When the legislative assembly is in session, administrative officers are required all the time for the presentation of the bill, for briefing the ministers, etc.
  - When the legislative assembly is not in session, the decision making by the executive requires a lot of inputs from various sources including the legislators who are the representative of the people.
- **Logistically difficult:** The development of a region can be done through policy interventions like industrial policy. However, separating the capitals can be against the convenience of the administration as well as the people. Also, it will be logistically difficult to implement.

## The Scrapping of Legislative Council

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- The legislative council of Andhra Pradesh was created in 1957 and was abolished in 1985. The Legislative Council in Andhra Pradesh was again revived in 2007, after the enactment of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council Act, 2005.
- The present government's argument for abolishing the legislative council, lack of support from the upper house, raises concerns.
- The legislative council, like the Rajya Sabha, facilitates the representation of eminent professionals and experts who cannot face direct elections. It checks the hasty decisions on legislations.

**Note: Article 169:** The Parliament can abolish a legislative council or create it if the legislative assembly of the concerned state passes a resolution by the special majority to that effect.

- It is not deemed as the amendment of the Constitution under Article 368.
- It is passed as an ordinary bill ie it requires only a simple majority in the Parliament.

## Way Forward

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- **Expenditure should be questioned:** People should be empowered to question the government if the later takes the decision to implement huge capital expenditure which might not be financially prudent.  
Having multiple capitals can have huge financial implications. Therefore, people should have the right to question the expenditure of the tax payer's money.
- **Empowering the local governments:** Decentralization in the State should take place by empowering the local governments i.e. the Panchayats and Municipal Corporations which were constituted after the enactment of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act.
- **Development through policy interventions:** Multiple capitals should not be used as an instrument for the development of the region. The development of the region can be brought by making an investment in the manufacturing and service sectors, bringing different policies benefiting the farmers and ease of doing business, development of the infrastructure, development of the social-cultural institutions such as universities, hospitals, etc.
- **Restructuring Legislative Council:** Instead of abolition, the composition of the Upper House in the State should be restructured to include professionals like doctors, engineers, etc other than the teachers. It will help the Legislative Council to become the body of elders which will give professional advice to the government.