Three Capitals in Andhra Pradesh

Why in news?

Andhra Pradesh CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy recently hinted that his government would work towards the South African model of three capitals in his State.

What is the proposal?

- In South Africa, the administrative capital is in Pretoria.
- Its national legislature is in Cape Town, and the judicial capital is in Bloemfontein.
- Likewise, Mr. Reddy proposes distribution of executive, legislative and judicial governance across Visakhapatnam, Amaravati (the current capital) and Kurnool respectively.

What is the rationale?

- The idea seems to stem from the reasoning that the distribution would allow for “a decentralised development of the State”.
- The location choices are in the upper, central and lower geographical regions of the State.
- Such an arrangement follows the recommendations of the expert committee appointed by the Home Affairs Ministry in 2014.
- It studied the alternatives for a new capital.
- The panel had argued against the need for a greenfield capital city.
- It instead suggested focusing on distributing locations of governance beyond the Vijayawada-Guntur-Tenali-Mangalagiri urban area.
- Meanwhile, it suggested utilising the time period of 10 years to continue functions from Hyderabad after bifurcation.
- The Chief Minister’s current idea of three capitals has also got support from the government-appointed G.N. Rao committee.
- It has recommended that the Assembly’s location be retained at Amaravati.
- The Secretariat and High Court were recommended to be moved to Visakhapatnam and Kurnool, respectively.

What are the challenges?

- Despite the expert committee’s recommendations, the earlier A.P. government led by the Telugu Desam Party had decided to build a grand

capital in Amaravati.

- The government had acquired large parcels of land from farmers.
- Many farmers had agreed to give up fertile land for the expansion of the capital as part of a land pooling scheme.
- They were to have received residential and commercial plots among other forms of compensation.
- Unsurprisingly, these farmers have protested the present decision to decentralise capital functions.
- On the other hand, the Secretariat and Legislative Assembly were shifted to Amaravati in 2016.
- The High Court began functioning in the beginning of 2019.
- Amaravati, which still requires significant development, has however become a functioning State capital for all purposes now.
- If the present government now limits Amaravati to hosting only the Assembly, it must take into account the concerns of the affected farmers.
- The government must consider the fact that considerable work has been completed in Amaravati to utilise it as a functioning capital.
- It must be taken into account before embarking upon the "decentralisation" idea (which was best served before the works in Amaravati began).

Source: The Hindu

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