



Naveen red flag over Andhra dam project

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New Delhi : In the backdrop of the Environment Ministry asking the Orissa government — where the Congress is in opposition — to stop work at South Korean major Posco’s project site, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has raised the red flag over Polavaram project in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh ruled by the Congress.

Patnaik is learnt to have conveyed to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that there were similar concerns over areas likely to be submerged in his state due to the Polavaram project as raised by Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh vis-a-vis the Posco project. Though Ramesh has kept a window open on the project in Orissa, saying it is “of strategic importance”, he has raised issues concerning the rights of traditional forest dwellers.

Patnaik is reported to have pointed out to the Prime Minister the double-standard of the Centre while giving a go-ahead to the Andhra project and pressing a pause button on Posco. This when Orissa itself has admitted that the implementation of the Forest Rights Act is pending in areas to be submerged due to the project in the neighbouring state.

In fact, Orissa has not taken kindly to the roadblock put up by Ramesh, who happens to be Congress’s Rajya Sabha MP from Andhra Pradesh.

These concerns, Orissa’s BJD MPs confide, have gained further weight in the wake of Congress’s attempts to broaden its base as evident from Rahul Gandhi’s attempt to get foothold in the state by championing the cause of the tribals.