

Jagan has a capital idea on Council

D.H. 28/1/20

AP Assembly okays resolution to abolish Upper House

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The YSRCP-controlled Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly on Monday approved a resolution aimed at abolishing its counterpart in law-making — the Legislative Council.

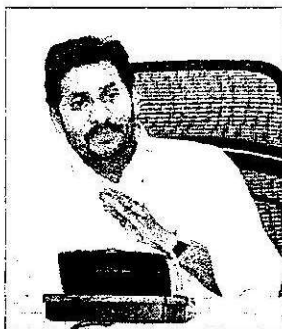
The move comes five days after the Council, where the Opposition Telugu Desam Party is in majority, blocked the Jaganmohan Reddy government's plans to shift the executive capital from Amaravati to Visakhapatnam.

The resolution will now be sent to the Centre. Parliament must pass a Constitutional Amendment Bill to dismantle the Council.

When that happens, only five states — Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Telangana — would be left with a bicameral legislature, a system comparable to the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha of Parliament.

Though Reddy's decision is provoked by TDP supremo Chandrababu Naidu's stiff stand that compelled Council chairman M A Sharif to refer capital restructure bills to a select committee last Wednesday, the chief minister has broadened the reasons why he is doing so.

"The Upper House was made optional by the constitutional provisions and only six out of the 28 states have it now. The Assembly is not even required to accept the



Jaganmohan Reddy

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Off with the Council!

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amendments proposed by the Council," Reddy said in his concluding remarks in a debate on a resolution he introduced in the House to abolish the Council.

"We are spending Rs 60 crore annually on the Council which is a total waste of public money... (especially) when bills for public good are being blocked with political agenda. A Council (in such circumstances) is a waste of time too," Reddy said.

"We know our party will be in majority in the Council next year, but for us, public utility, government responsibility is paramount," Jagan said.

The Andhra Pradesh Assembly has 175 MLAs, out of which 151 are of YSRCP.

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While the TDP with 23 MLAs boycotted the session, all the 133 MLAs present in the House voted in favour of the resolution in a division of votes held by Speaker Tammineni Sitaram as required by the law.

YSRCP ministers said the TDP-dominated Council has in the recent past also put hurdles to English medium in government schools, separate commissions for SCs and STs bills.

Pointing to the Council composition with members elected from teachers', graduates' constituencies apart from eminent persons nominated, Reddy said the AP Assembly also has many graduates, post-graduates, doctors, engineers, former civil servants, journalists and even actors, thus making the upper house redundant.

Reddy ended his speech with a quote of Martin Luther King Jr — "The time is always right to do what is right."

Bengaluru