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Date: March 2, 2026

To

(1) The Hon'ble Union Minister for Jal Shakti,
Government of India, New Delhi.

(2) The Chairman,
Central Water Commission (CWC),
Sewa Bhawan, New Delhi.

(3) The Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Government of Andhra Pradesh,
Velagapudi, Amaravati.

(4) The Hon'ble Minister for Water Resources (Irrigation),
Government of Andhra Pradesh.

(5) The Chairman,
Polavaram Project Authority,
Hyderabad.

Respected Sirs,

Subject: URGENT REPRESENTATION – Imminent Safety Risk at Polavaram Project due to Critical Engineering Failures, Unauthorized Design Changes, and Neglected Repairs.

Ref:

- (1) Minutes dated 8-12-2023 of review meeting of Polavaram Irrigation Project held on 5-12-2023
- (2) Letter from CEC to Member Secretary, PPA dated 24-9-2025
- (3) Panel of Experts Report No.5 dated 2-10-2025
- (4) Letter from CWC to Chief Engineer, Polavaram Irrigation Project, dated 27-10-2025
- (5) Letter from CWC to Chief Engineer (P&D), PPA dated 6-11-2025
- (6) Memorandum from Panel of Experts to Polavaram Project Team dated 4-12-2025
- (7) Letter from CWC to Chief Engineer (P&D), PPA dated 17-12-2025
- (8) Letter from CWC to Chief Engineer (P&D), PPA, dated 13-1-2026
- (9) Compliance sent by WRD, AP to CWC letters dated 6-11-2025 and 27-10-2025, dated 13-1-2026
- (10) Letter from CWC to CEO, PPA - report reg. site visit by CWC and PoE - dated 30-1-2026
- (11) Letter from CWC to Chief Engineer (P&D), PPA, dated 9-2-2026 reg. ECRF Dam at Gap-II
- (12) Letter from CWC to Chief Engineer (P&D), PPA, dated 9-2-2026 reg. ECRF Dam at Gap-I
- (13) Lr.No.EE/PIPHW Divn.No.III/Plvm/DB dated 17-6-2025
- (14) Memo dated 4-7-2025 from PoE communicated to M.Raghuram, PPA dated 5-7-2025
- (15) Panel of Experts (PoE) Summary of Discussions for Site Visit #6 / Meeting #6, dated January 23, 2026

We are writing to you on behalf of the “Centre for Liberty”, as concerned citizens and as civil society stakeholders. After a meticulous review of the official correspondence between the Central Water Commission (CWC), the Polavaram Project Authority (PPA), and the International Panel of Experts (PoE) from December 2023 to February 2026, we are compelled to bring to your immediate attention a series of alarming technical and execution failures that threaten the structural integrity of the Polavaram Dam and, by implication, the lives of lakhs of people living downstream of the project.

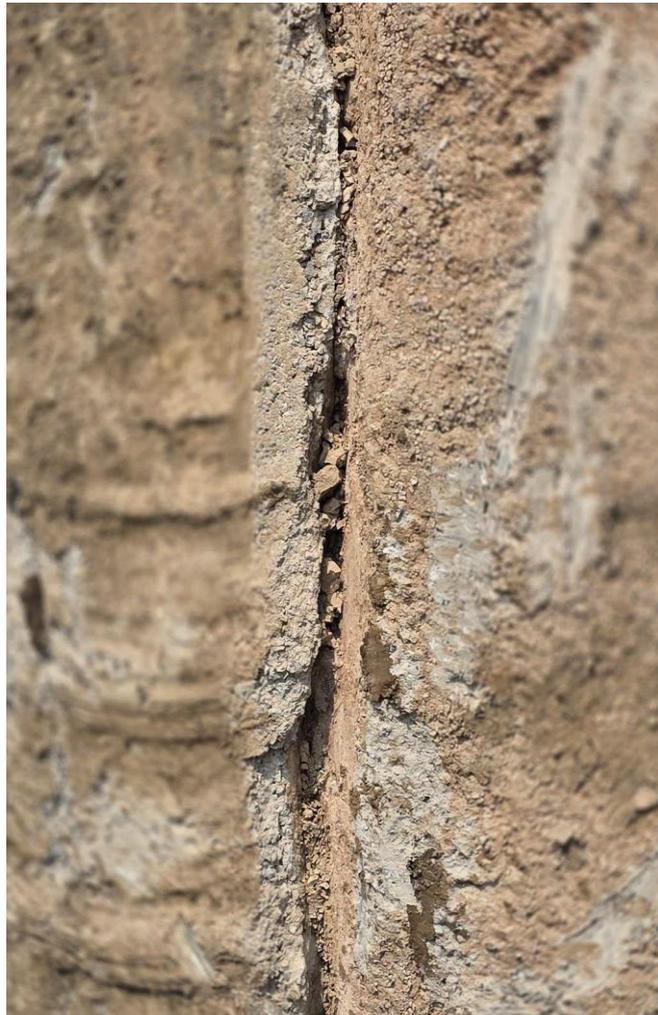
The official records (cited in the references above) reveal a pattern of “continuous” execution failures, unauthorized design deviations, and critical neglect of safety recommendations. Some of the findings of CWC and PoE and their implications are listed below:

1. Compromised Diaphragm-Wall Integrity: "Daily Bleeding" & Testing Blind Spots

The Diaphragm Wall (D-Wall) is the "heart" of the ECRF dam that prevents water seepage from undermining the structure. The execution of this critical wall in Gap-II has suffered from severe quality control failures. The PoE Visit 5 Report (Section 4.2) referred to in Sr.No.3 above, records that "Bleeding was observed on a daily basis" during the concreting of the D-Wall. This separation of water from the mix creates vertical "wormholes" (bleed channels) that destroy the wall's impermeability. In the PoE Memorandum dated December 04, 2025 cited vide Sr.No.6 above, the experts expressed officially that "It is disappointing to be informed at this time that the quality is unsatisfactory."

The experts have requested "Cross-Wall Sonic Logging" (CSL) only "where possible," indicating that the access tubes may not have been installed in all panels. If we cannot test the wall at depths of 50-100 meters, we are building a dam on a foundation we cannot verify and certify. The “Observations” cited 15th above, contain damaging photographs of portions of D-Wall above the ground level with new cement plaster covering up exposed concrete and unacceptably wide gaps between D-Wall panels.





2.Reduction of Wall Height Due to Failure Not Design

The final height of the Cut-Off Wall is being dangerously reduced below its design requirements not to optimize the structure, but to hide defective work. According to the Panel of Experts (PoE) Memorandum (Report No. 24-02005-M-026 Rev 0) dated December 04, 2025 cited in the 6th reference above, the D-Wall was originally designed to have a final cut-off elevation at EL. 19.0 m (with a temporary pouring platform at EL. 20.0 m). The experts noted that the overpour was specifically planned "to ensure the quality of the concrete below EL. 19.0 m."

However, this buffer failed to protect the main structure. The PoE explicitly documented "uncertainty regarding the top elevation of the D-wall... due to poor quality plastic concrete". Because the concrete was severely compromised, the contractor was forced to break the wall down far below the intended design level just to reach solid material. The PoE urgently warned that "cutting the wall down to EL. 18.5 m (or possibly EL. 18 m) poses problems, which must be addressed." This is a stark admission that the dam's critical cutoff parameters and safe embedment into the earth dam are being compromised solely to accommodate the contractor's execution failures.

3. Criminal Neglect of the Guide Bund (U/S of Spillway)

The safety of the Spillway is paramount. However, the Panel of Experts (PoE) in their Visit 5 Report (Report No. 24-02005-R-005, 2nd October 2025) cited vide ref no.3 above, explicitly flagged that the repair of the Guide Bund—a critical component for flood management—has been dangerously delayed. The PoE stated that they "strongly suggest, to address ASAP all the spillway related items and in particular the Guide Bund that will require the design and construction of a new Diaphragm-Wall".

After having observed the destruction of the guide bund in 2023 itself, this repair should have been the first priority before embarking on other works. Neglecting the Guide Bund while rushing to close the upstream coffer dam and starting the Gap-II earthworks puts the entire flood discharge system of the spillway at risk and further complicates the repair/reconstruction of the guide bund itself. Responsibility for the failed guide bund is yet to be fixed and the repair/reconstruction designs are yet to be finalized.

4. Abandonment of Spillway Approach Channel Excavation and Data Manipulation

The balance excavation of the approach channel up to +17m EL is severely delayed and yet to be addressed. Alarming, based on the recent PoE 6 discussion summary (January 2026) cited in Reference 15, there are now active plans to not dredge the remaining portion at all. To justify this dangerous omission, official figures are being actively manipulated. According to the official Water Resources Department correspondence from the Executive Engineer dated June 17, 2025 (cited as Reference 13), the balance earthwork yet to be excavated in the approach channel was strictly documented as 38.55 Lakh Cubic Meters. However, the January 2026 PoE 6 presentation inexplicably shrinks this backlog down to an "Approximate volume to be removed" of just 500,000 cubic meters—artificially minimizing the actual problem by 87%. By drastically underreporting the scale of the remaining excavation on paper, project authorities are attempting to altogether abandon the dredging effort to artificially accelerate the project schedule. Leaving the approach channel unexcavated arbitrarily alters the approved hydraulic design profile and restricts the safe flow of floodwaters to the spillway. The full and proper excavation of the approach channel, alongside the guide bund reconstruction, is an absolute, non-negotiable safety requirement that will likely take at least two dry seasons to execute completely.

5. Unauthorized Design Changes in Gap-I

The executing agencies are unilaterally altering approved designs without CWC consent, a practice that the CWC itself has termed unacceptable. In the CWC Letter dated 17.12.2025 cited in Ref. Sr. No. 7 above, the Director (Embankment) noted that the trench level in Gap-I was changed from EL 23.0m to EL 24.0m “without providing any justification” and ordered that “This practice needs to stop immediately.” Here, the concern is that if the foundation depth is reduced by 1 meter without approval, the dam's stability against sliding and seepage is compromised.

We, on behalf of the people of Andhra Pradesh, demand the CWC and WRD, AP to “Stop Playing with Lives”. The Polavaram Project is not merely a construction contract; it is a lifeline for the state and a potential weapon of mass destruction if it fails. The current "patchwork" approach—where designs are lowered to match poor quality of execution and critical repairs are deferred—is a recipe for disaster.

We specifically demand:

1. Immediate Constitution of an Independent International Review Panel: The current execution is struggling to meet the standards set by the existing experts. We need a fresh, independent body (outside the current contract) to audit the "Bleeding" issue and certify the integrity of the D-Wall at deeper-levels before a single cubic meter of clay is placed over it.

2. Appointment of a competent agency outside the influence of the contracting agency to work as PMC, to give truthful reports and timely alerts to the PPA.

3. Appointment of strict 100% quality control by either CSMRS of Govt of India or an equally competent global agency, which shall work outside the contracting agency's influence.

4. Immediate "Slow Down" of further Works: Speed of construction cannot be prioritized over safety. Work on the ECRF Dam must be paused or significantly slowed until the "Correlation Study" on concrete bleeding (requested by PoE) is published and vetted.

5. To Prioritize Guide Bund Repairs: Resources must be immediately directed to the Spillway Guide Bund reconstruction as per the PoE's "ASAP" recommendation.

6. Accountability: A White Paper must be released explaining why the Gap-I designs were altered without CWC approval and who authorized the continuation of D-Wall construction despite the "daily bleeding" reports of Bauer in Gap-II.

7. After conducting required tests and taking corrective measures possible, even if it means construction of a new D-Wall, nothing short of the Ministry of Jalshakti should declare the D-Wall as 'safe' before it is covered up under the ECRF dam work.

8. Fix Responsibility for Guide Bund Failure: Identify the specific agencies, contractors, and officials responsible for the catastrophic structural failure of the upstream guide bund in 2023. We demand that strict disciplinary and legal action be initiated against those accountable for this massive loss to the exchequer and the resulting delay in flood management readiness.

9. Transparency of Concrete Pour Records: Mandate complete public transparency regarding the construction of the Gap-II D-Wall. We demand that all daily concrete pour

records, quality control logs, and the specific "daily bleeding" reports submitted by the executing agency (Bauer) be immediately uploaded on a government website, accessible to public scrutiny.

10. Disclosure of Cross-Wall Sonic Logging (CSL) Results: The Panel of Experts formally recommended conducting Cross-Wall Sonic Logging (CSL) tests "where possible" to verify the compromised integrity of the upper D-Wall. We demand immediate public disclosure clarifying: Has this testing been executed? If so, on how many panels or samples? And what are the complete, unedited results of these tests?

We trust you will treat this representation with the gravity it deserves. If these engineering violations continue unchecked, we will be forced to move the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India to seek a court-monitored safety audit to protect the fundamental right to life of the population downstream of the project.

Yours Sincerely,

Centre for Liberty

A.B.Venkateswara Rao (Chairman)

Nalamotu Chakravarthy

Y. Srinivas Reddy

Piyush Boda