



# New India state Telangana may fuel other statehood movements

The central government in India announced Wednesday it would move to create a new state, Telangana, within the state Andhra Pradesh. Telangana is likely to serve as a precedent for other statehood movements.



Supporters of pro-Telangana hold flags and celebrate in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad, Thursday. Krishnendu Halder/Reuters

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By *Mian Ridge*, Correspondent / December 11, 2009

New Delhi  
Protesters set fire to vehicles and burned effigies of senior politicians across the southern state of Andhra Pradesh Friday over plans to create a new state, Telangana, within the state – a move analysts warn will be seen as a precedent for other statehood movements around the country.

The central government announced Wednesday that it would push to carve Telangana, currently one of India's most impoverished regions, out of Andhra Pradesh, one of India's biggest states and home to the city of Hyderabad, where the Indian headquarters of firms including Microsoft and Google are located.

The issue has long roused passions. Wednesday's announcement followed a five-decade campaign for Telangana, which was last violently active in 1969, when over 400 people were killed in riots.

Lately, the movement had died down, but in recent weeks, it gained momentum with the well-publicized fast of an activist, K Chandrasekhar Rao, and violent protests in Hyderabad – which quickly turned to triumphant celebrations Wednesday.

Telangana may serve as a precedent to other statehood movements: The most active of these include demands for a new Gorkhaland state in northwest Bengal; Vidarbha in Maharashtra; and Bodoland in Assam.

"Whatever the arguments for and against the legitimacy of the Telangana cause, it's clear that by ceding to it, the Centre has stirred up a hornet's nest," said the Financial Express newspaper in an editorial Thursday.

State separatists have more than Telangana to encourage them, however. Although linguistic differences were originally used to carve out India's large states, other claims, such as economic disparities, have prompted the creation of newer states in recent years.

In 2000, three new states were made: Chhattisgarh, which was part of Madhya Pradesh; Uttarakhand, from Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand, out of Bihar. Telangana will be India's 29th state.

More locally, there are fears that if the up and coming city of Hyderabad is included in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, which has invested heavily in its main city, will lose significant amounts of revenue.

Friday, more than 100 members of the state assembly were reported to have resigned in protest.

The region – soon to be state – of Telangana comprises 10 districts. Supporters of the statehood movement have long accused the central government of ignoring the region; while politicians have used the issue during electioneering.

The Congress party, which leads the central government, formed an alliance with a party dedicated to the creation of the state, the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS), in 2004, but the TRS accused the party of renegeing on its word.

Some observers believe that the government has been forced to promise the new state now because of local political upheavals. In September, Andhra Pradesh's powerful chief minister, YS Reddy, was killed in a helicopter crash. His successor, K Rosaiah has not shared Mr. Reddy's success in controlling the Telangana movement.

The government has not set a time frame for Telangana's creation. Some have seen back-pedaling in Prime Minister Manmohan's Singh's comments in parliament Friday that nothing would be done in haste.

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