THE COSTS OF THE CLOUD:

PEOPLES STRUGGLE FOR LAND, WATER, ENERGY AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE IN VIZAG

SOLIDARITY VISIT REPORT



October 2026

Vizag Solidarity Team

THE COSTS OF THE CLOUD

Peoples Struggle for Land,Water, Energy and Ecological Justice in Vizag

SOLIDARITY VISIT REPORT

October 2026

VIZAG SOLIDARITY TEAM

Friends of the Earth, India | Centre for Financial Accountability
National Alliance for Climate & Ecological Justice | Manthan Adhyayan Kendra | Traditional Fishworkers Union, Andhra Pradesh | Climate Front India

VIZAG SOLIDARITY TEAM

The Visakhapatnam Solidarity Visit was a collective initiative bringing together organisations and individuals committed to ecological justice, community rights, and the protection of the commons. The visit sought to understand the emerging challenges posed by the expansion of AI data centres and to express solidarity with communities defending their land, water, energy resources, livelihoods, and shared natural resources.

SOLIDARITY TEAM MEMBERS

Sarath Cheloor- Friends of the Earth India (FoE India)

Anjali S- Centre for Financial Accountability (CFA)

Meera Sanghamithra- National Alliance for Climate & Ecological Justice (NACEJ)

Prasad Chacko- Friends of the Earth India (FoE India)

Jeffrey Mathew- National Alliance for Climate & Ecological Justice (NACEJ)

Shripad Dharmadhikari- Manthan Adhyayan Kendra

Varalakshmi Kovvada- Traditional Fishworkers Union, Andhra Pradesh

Ruchit Asha Kamal- Climate Front India

REPORT DEVELOPMENT AND WRITING - Anjali S, Shripad Dharmadhikari, Prasad Chacko, Jeffrey Mathews, Meera Sanghamithra , Sarath Cheloor

SPECIAL THANKS - Amitanshu Verma, Centre for Financial Accountability

FACILITATION AND COORDINATION- Sarath Cheloor, Aashima Subberwal

DESIGN AND LAYOUT - Arun Mohan, The Media Collective

COVER PICTURE - https://stopdirtydatacenters.org/

Acknowledgements

This report is the outcome of the collective efforts, shared reflections, and solidarity of the visiting team and the communities and organisations engaged in the struggle against the expansion of AI data centres in Visakhapatnam. The report seeks to document the concerns of affected communities, highlight the ecological and social implications of large-scale data centre development, and strengthen collective efforts towards ecological justice and the protection of the commons.

We are grateful to all the community members in Vizag who gave us their time and spoke with us with such patience, openness, and diligence. Their experiences, observations and insights were invaluable to our understanding of the developments taking place in the city and of the concerns emerging around the expansion of AI data centres. We are deeply indebted to the Green Vishaka team, including Raja Rama Mohan Roy, Sripath Roy, DeekshaVanguru and Shailendra, among many others, and to allied organisations such as the Human Rights Forum, Coalition for Regulation of A.I. and others who are building and strengthening the movement in Vizag with remarkable energy.

Thankful for the time they took not only to help us understand the nitty-gritty of what is unfolding in Vizag, but also to warmly welcome us into their public meetings and rallies to stand in solidarity with their ongoing struggle. The Public Statements by the Human Rights Forum, as well as Former Union Power Secretary and environmentalist E.A.S. Sarma's writings, have been crucial as well.

VIZAG SOLIDARITY TEAM

Please find **more information** about the ongoing struggle here:
stopdirtydatacenters.org

As a part of the ongoing movement, the People of Vizag held a **People's Convention** on 6 September 2026. Please find out more about the convention here:
https://stopdirtydatacenters.org/convention/

For any queries related to the content of the report, **please feel free to reach out to** Sarath Cheloor (foeindia21@gmail.com) & Anjali S (anjali@cenfa.org)

CONTENT

PART 1

WHY A SOLIDARITY VISIT? **5 - 10**

In Solidarity with the People of Visakhapatnam

PART 2

WHAT ARE THE PRESENT CONCERNS? **11 -26**

A. From Storage to Compute: What Changed?

B. Why is AI Infrastructure Moving to the Global South?

C. Water and Energy

D. Land, State and Capital: Tarluvada

E. Employment Promises

F. Public Money, Private AI: The Heavily Subsidised Data-Centres

PART 3

IT'S NOT JUST VIZAG **26 - 30**

The Resistance Is Global

The Alarming Tone Is Valid

PART 1. WHY A SOLIDARITY VISIT?

In Solidarity with the People of Visakhapatnam

Across India, the push for artificial intelligence is increasingly accompanied by a rapid expansion of the infrastructure required to support it. From government-led AI summits and investment announcements to the promotion of large-scale data centres, AI is being presented as an important part of India's technological and economic future. But behind the language of innovation and investment are very tangible concerns around **where these data centres will be built, the land and water they will use, the electricity they will require, the employment they will generate and the conditions of that employment**. The digital economy is deeply material, and these costs cannot be separated from the technology being promoted.

It is in this context that the developments in Visakhapatnam need to be understood. Since the proposed projects were first announced in 2025, activists, environmentalists, citizens and local organisations have consistently raised concerns around land acquisition, water and energy requirements, livelihoods, environmental impacts, public resources and the lack of meaningful public consultation. The proposed Google–Adani data-centre development has become a focal point of this resistance, but the concerns extend to the wider expansion of data-centre infrastructure being promoted across the region.



The resistance in Vizag has not been based simply on opposition to technology or investment.Local citizens, researchers and campaigners have undertaken site-level research, examined available government documents, documented ecological and livelihood concerns and produced a fact-finding report on the proposed data centres. Their work has been accompanied by serious concerns raised by environmental researchers and people with experience in government and environmental institutions about the scale of the projects and the manner in which clearances and other decisions have been pursued. Alongside this, the movement has faced restrictions and attempts to curb dissent, including around public mobilisation and social media.


SAVE MUDASARLOVA ARILOVA
VIZAG COMES AGAINST DATA CENTRE
OUR ONLY HOME is in FIRE
SAY NO TO THE DATA CENTRE PLANET OVER PROFIT
STOP CUTTING OF TREES OUR SAVIOUR
DATA CENTER TARLUVADA


OUR ONLY HOME is in FIRE
NOT ONE DROP FOR DATA
25000 TREES BURNT ALIVE!!
Funny how I'm Called ANTI-DEVELOP for hanting Clean Air & Wat

Friends of the Earth India initiated discussions with member organisations and community groups to organise a Solidarity Visit to Visakhapatnam, recognizing the need to stand alongside the people already resisting the expansion of large-scale AI data centres.







The Solidarity Visit, held from **17-19 July 2026**, grew directly out of this collective effort and the ongoing struggles on the ground. We travelled to Visakhapatnam to stand with the movement, listen to affected communities, understand their concerns more deeply, and strengthen solidarity with those resisting a development model being advanced without adequate public participation. The visit also aimed to bring the voices and experiences of these communities into wider national and international conversations on AI, data centres and the future of our commons.



During the visit, we went to **two of the three proposed Google–Adani data-centre sites** along with local activists and met communities that are likely to be directly affected by the construction and operation of these facilities. We also met movement leaders, activists and local campaigners who have been closely tracking the projects. What emerged clearly was that the concerns being raised are grounded in specific

experiences and evidence. People spoke about land, water, electricity, livelihoods, compensation and ecological impacts, while the local movement continued to monitor government approvals and the successive data-centre projects being cleared across the region.



On **18 July**, a public meeting brought together students, engineers, people working in the corporate sector, former government employees, scientists, activists and other concerned citizens. The discussion reflected concerns that go beyond individual landowners to the implications of large-scale data-centre infrastructure for Visakhapatnam as a whole. The following day, **19 July**, a public rally brought these concerns into the wider public sphere. Organisations including the **Green Visakha** and allied groups such as the Human Rights Forum, Coalition for Regulation of A.I. along with individuals, have contributed to this broader effort.

A central concern emerging from the movement is the role of the state. When infrastructure projects involve hundreds of acres of land, large requirements of water and electricity, substantial public subsidies and changes to local infrastructure, the state cannot function only as a facilitator of private investment. It also has a responsibility to scrutinise projects, ensure transparency, disclose relevant information, protect affected communities and subject environmental and other approvals to meaningful public scrutiny. Yet people in Vizag have repeatedly raised concerns

about inadequate consultation, limited access to information and rushed or insufficient processes.[1]



The question of public resources is inseparable from this. Land, electricity, water, roads, transmission infrastructure and public funds are being committed to support private data-centre projects. At the same time, employment is one of the principal benefits cited in support of these investments, even as questions remain around the number of jobs, their quality, their permanence and their accessibility to local communities. These questions become particularly important when the scale of public support is substantial and the ecological and livelihood costs may fall disproportionately on local communities.



Through the efforts of organisations and individuals on the ground, civil society groups and independent journalists, we were able to access a wider range of government documents and independent research relating to the proposed data centres. We have examined these materials alongside what we heard, recorded and witnessed during the visit, the fact-finding

[1] Sarma, E. A. (2026, June 6). *AI data centres and environmental justice: E.A.S. Sarma urges scrutiny of projects amid ecological and human rights concerns*. Countercurrents.

work already undertaken by local researchers and campaigners and our own analyses of official documents as well as recent solid reporting around AI Data Centres beyond Vizag.

Following the visit, a solidarity statement and the National Solidarity Webinar on 30 August 2026 brought together the Visakhapatnam movement, people's organisations, allies and wider networks to amplify the voices of affected communities and build a stronger national response.



Further support and solidarity actions will connect this struggle with communities resisting the expanding footprint of AI and Data Centre infrastructure across the world. We stand with the people of Visakhapatnam in their demand for justice, transparency, ecological protection and democratic participation. Their resistance is not a rejection of technology or progress. It is a challenge to a model of development that asks people to sacrifice their land, resources, and futures for corporate gain. It is a demand for a different future—one where technology serves people and the planet, rather than people and nature being made to serve technology and corporate power.

PART 2. WHAT ARE THE PRESENT CONCERNS?

A. From Storage to Compute: What changed?

Data centres are not new. For years, they have provided the physical infrastructure needed to store information, host websites, run enterprise software, and manage services such as email. What is changing with the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence is the scale and intensity of computing that these facilities are expected to perform.

The distinction is fairly simple: **traditional data centres were primarily built around storing and managing information, while AI data centres are increasingly built around processing enormous quantities of information.** This shift has significant consequences for the physical infrastructure required to support them.

Traditional data centres generally rely on conventional Central Processing Units (CPUs), with relatively modest power requirements. Typical rack densities are around 5–15 kW, and air cooling through Computer Room Air Conditioning (CRAC) or Computer Room Air Handler (CRAH) systems is generally sufficient. Their Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE), a measure of the additional energy required to operate a facility beyond the energy used for computing, typically ranges between 1.4 and 1.6. Their workloads are also comparatively predictable, making planning for cooling and energy somewhat easier.[2]

AI changes this equation. GPUs and other AI accelerators can perform thousands of calculations simultaneously, allowing enormous amounts of computing to be concentrated in a relatively small physical space. Rack power requirements can therefore rise from the conventional 5–15 kW range to 30–200 kW or more, with some facilities reaching even higher densities.[3]The consequence is straightforward: **the more computation packed into a space, the more heat has to be removed from it.** Air, being a relatively poor conductor of heat compared with water, becomes increasingly inadequate as chip power rises. This is why AI data centres are moving towards direct-to-chip liquid cooling and, in some cases, immersion cooling. The change extends beyond cooling itself. AI facilities require specialised power delivery, stronger floors for heavier equipment and much greater fibre density to enable rapid communication between GPUs.[4]

The physical footprint of AI is therefore very different from the image of an almost weightless "cloud". High-density computing creates new demands for electricity, cooling, land and supporting infrastructure. It can also change the environment around these facilities through heat and noise.

[2] Rai, NASSCOM Community: Liquid Cooled Data Center vs Traditional Data Center
[3] Datacenters,com Team (2026, July 13). *Inside the AI data center: What makes it different from traditional facilities?* Datacenters.com.
[4] Rai, NASSCOM Community: Liquid Cooled Data Center vs Traditional Data Center

Experiences around facilities such as xAI's Colossus in Memphis, for example, have drawn attention to noise and other impacts on surrounding communities.[5]

B. Why is AI Infrastructure Moving to the Global South?

The changing technical requirements of AI data centres also raise a larger political-economic question: **where is this infrastructure being built, and why?**

AI infrastructure is increasingly being developed through different models. Technology companies such as Google, Microsoft, Meta and Amazon are building large dedicated campuses. Other projects bring global technology companies into partnerships with domestic conglomerates, as in the proposed Google–Adani project in Vizag. Colocation[6] companies such as AirTrunk and Yotta provide infrastructure that can be leased by multiple technology companies, while governments are increasingly promoting "sovereign AI" computing capacity as a strategic national asset.

These models differ, but they have something in common: **AI data centres need enormous quantities of physical resources.** Land has to be acquired, electricity has to be supplied, cooling systems have to be built and, increasingly, water has to be secured. This makes the geography of AI infrastructure inseparable from questions of resource access.

The experience of Singapore is revealing. Planning restrictions and limits on new data-centre development have encouraged companies to look towards neighboring Johor in Malaysia and Batam in Indonesia.[7]

India has similarly positioned itself as a major destination for data-centre investment. According to IndiaAI, the country attracted nearly $60 billion in data-centre investment commitments between 2019 and 2024, with states competing to attract projects through incentives and supportive policies.[8] This movement cannot be explained simply by the availability of cheap land. Access to electricity and water, large parcels of land, tax incentives, infrastructure policies and regulatory environments all influence where companies build. When capital can move across borders, there is also an incentive to seek locations where these resources can be secured at relatively low cost and where regulatory processes are more accommodating.

[5] Blake Crosley: Liquid vs Air Cooling AI Data Centers

[6] Colocation is the practice of renting physical space within a data center to host servers and other IT equipment. This physical space, known as a colocation facility or data center, is designed to provide the necessary environment for optimal operation of servers and networking gear.

[7] Seo, H. (2026, April 7). *Whose water powers the cloud? Data centers and the right to water in Johor*. The Diplomat.

[8] Jeevanandam, N. (2024, December 18). *India's AI-powered data centre boom: $100 billion investment forecast by 2027: CBRE*. IndiaAI.

An independent analysis of the proposed Google–Adani data centres in Vizag makes this argument in particularly stark terms, connecting the expansion of data-centre infrastructure in India to questions of environmental regulation, data sovereignty and resistance elsewhere.[9]This is where the idea of **digital colonialism** becomes useful. The concern is not that the Global South is simply adopting new technology. Rather, the question is whether the material costs of an increasingly digital economy (land, water, energy and environmental degradation) are increasingly being borne by communities that have relatively little control over the corporations and technologies driving this expansion and who derive only limited benefits from this infrastructure.

The controversy around Google's data centre in Uruguay, constructed amid a severe drought, has similarly been used by critics to question whether the infrastructure of the digital economy is being built at the expense of local ecological needs.[10] The Global South is therefore not simply a new market for AI. It is increasingly becoming a **site for the physical infrastructure on which the AI economy depends**. That distinction matters. The technology may be developed and controlled elsewhere, while the land, water, electricity and environmental costs of making it possible are absorbed locally.

C. Water and Energy

Water is emerging as one of the most serious local concerns around the expansion of data centres in Vizag. The concern is not only about the quantity of water these facilities may consume, but also about where that water will come from, who will bear the resulting shortages, and how wastewater will be managed.

This is particularly significant in a city that already faces a reported **66 MLD public water deficit**, with temperatures rising to around 45°C in summer.[11] The areas where some of the data centres are being developed also face local water stress. Around the proposed Mudasarlova data centre, for instance, increasing demand from the Health City and other developments has contributed to groundwater exploitation and shortages. Local communities and groups working on data-centre impacts therefore have strong concerns about the additional pressure these projects will place on existing supplies.

The scale of the proposed water demand is considerable. The projects with 2.5 GW capacity are reported to require **6.85 crore litres (68.5 million litres) of water a day at peak**, equivalent to roughly 12% of Visakhapatnam's municipal water supply[12]. At the same time, the state policy

[9] Countercurrents: Google-Raiden-Adani Data Centres in Vizag
[10] McGovern, G., & Branford, S. (2023, November 2). *The cloud vs. drought: Water hog data centers threaten Latin America, critics say*. Mongabay.
[11] Coalition for Regulation of AI. (2026). Fact-finding report: Google AI data centre, Visakhapatnam.
[12] Coalition for Regulation of AI. (2026). Fact-finding report: Google AI data centre, Visakhapatnam.

classifies data centres as “essential services” and “mission critical infrastructure”, giving them priority, including 24x7 water supply.[13] In a situation of existing scarcity, this raises a basic question: **if data centres receive priority, who bears the consequences when there is not enough water for everyone?**

There is also considerable uncertainty about the actual water requirements of these projects. The Environmental Clearance (EC) documents reviewed by the team appear to account for water used for domestic purposes, green belts and equipment cleaning, but do not clearly include the water required for cooling. This is significant because cooling is one of the central water demands of a high-density data centre. The absence of information about the cooling systems that will be used makes it difficult to determine the actual water footprint of the projects.

Global evidence indicates that the gap could be substantial. Water is required primarily to remove the enormous amount of heat generated by computing equipment. As AI use shifts increasingly from the training of models towards large-scale **inference**—the processing of everyday queries—the demand for computing, and consequently cooling, is expected to grow. *All About AI* estimates that inference now accounts for 60–70% of total AI energy consumption.

Research published by the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) illustrates the scale of water use associated with AI computing. It estimates that, in the US, a GPT-3 query could require approximately **2.2 ml of on-site water**. At the scale of billions of queries, even such small quantities add up rapidly. The same research also estimates that data centres can evaporate between **1 and 9 litres of water per kWh of server energy use**, depending on weather conditions and operational settings.

These figures provide a useful indication of what could happen at the scale of Vizag's proposed facilities. At the lower end of the 1 litre/kWh estimate, a **1 GW data centre could consume around 8.76 million cubic metres of water a year** if it relies on evaporative cooling. This is substantially higher - about 90 times higher - than the 267 KLD of water stated in the Environmental Clearance letter for the 1 GW Tarluvada project. For comparison, 8.76 million cubic metres is roughly equivalent to the water required for protective irrigation of around 4,300 acres of land.

The exact figure will, however, depend heavily on the cooling technology used. Air cooling and other systems can reduce direct water consumption, but they are not necessarily without trade-offs. The Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory's *2024 United States Data Center Energy Usage Report* identifies several cooling options while noting that reducing water use can, in many cases, increase energy consumption. The report also notes the continuing role of evaporative cooling in removing heat from IT equipment.

[13] Govt of Andhra Pradesh Order, G.O.Ms. No. 55, 21 August 2026.

Climate matters too. The ACM research points out that outside-air cooling becomes more difficult in hot conditions and may still require water evaporation when temperatures rise above approximately 30°C. This is particularly relevant to Vizag, where high temperatures are already common. Yet the public has little information about which cooling technologies the proposed facilities will use or how much water those systems will require.

The scale becomes even more concerning when the **cumulative impact** of multiple projects is considered. The data-centre capacity reportedly planned in and around Vizag is around **8.7 GW**. Assessing each project individually risks missing the combined pressure that these facilities could place on the region's water resources. The EC process, as reviewed by the team, does not appear to have adequately addressed this cumulative impact.

The source of the water is another important concern. The EC documents for the Rambilli, Mudasarlova and Tarluvada data centres identify the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Department as the source of water. This means that the projects could draw from the same broader water systems on which rural communities depend. The government should therefore make public the expected water allocation for each project and explain how these allocations will affect existing users.



There are also concerns about wastewater. The quantity and nature of effluents will depend partly on the cooling systems used, but these systems have not been made sufficiently clear. The EC documents prescribe Zero Liquid Discharge, but it remains unclear whether this requirement covers cooling-related wastewater or only the relatively limited water uses specified in the

documents. Around Mudasarlova, there are additional concerns about possible wastewater entering the reservoir's catchment area.

Finally, **the lack of transparency is itself a water-related concern**. No public consultation was reportedly held as part of the Environmental Clearance process, while clearances were granted within a very short period. Communities were therefore not given a meaningful opportunity to ask basic questions about water sources, cooling systems, consumption or wastewater management.

The central issue is not simply that data centres use water. It is that **large quantities of water are being committed to a new and rapidly expanding industry in a region that already experiences water stress, while the public has limited information about the actual scale of that demand**. Until the cooling systems, complete water requirements, sources of supply, wastewater arrangements, and cumulative impacts are made public, the water footprint of Vizag's AI infrastructure remains significantly underexamined. Infact, India's data-centre expansion is moving far beyond small facilities: the **Ministry of Power estimates that data centres could require up to 26.3 GW of power by 2031–32**, compared with India's current installed generation capacity of about **520 GW**, equivalent to roughly **5% of today's installed capacity**.[14]

At the same time, the same reporting estimates also suggest that **AI-driven data centres alone could require an additional 40–45 TWh of electricity by 2030**, while it should be noted that Visakhapatnam could soon host **up to 8 GW of data-centre capacity**; Google's three proposed facilities account for **2.5 GW**, more than India's entire installed data-centre capacity of **2.2 GW in 2025**. The pressure is not simply about the amount of electricity but the **continuous demand** that a 1 GW facility operating around the clock would require major grid upgrades and multiple gigawatts of generation capacity to reliably supply it.

AI data centres are becoming major electricity consumers because of the density of computing they support. As demand rises, technology companies are increasingly looking for ways to present this expansion as compatible with a transition towards cleaner energy, including through investments in nuclear power and small modular reactors (SMRs).

The economics and timelines of this transition, however, remain uncertain. Questions have been raised about whether the nuclear investments announced by major technology companies are remotely large enough to meet the scale of the electricity demand being generated by data-centre expansion. It also points to the still-unproven economics of SMRs at scale.[15]Serious questions also exist about the impacts of the proposed SMR-based expansion of nuclear energy sources.

[14] Rajshekhar, M. (2026, July 31). *How should India power its data centres?* CarbonCopy.
[15] Langabeer, M., & Ramana, M. V. (2026, July 20). *Data centers powered by next-gen nuclear? Don't fall for Big Tech's PR hype.* Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.

The AI boom is happening now, while many of the proposed "clean" energy solutions remain years away. The clean energy sources that are viable and available today, like Solar PV and wind energy-based electricity, require large areas of land, which have their own impacts. Any claims that these data centres will meet their energy requirements using clean energy sources must also include assessments of the impacts of these sources when estimating the overall impacts of the data centres. We have not seen such estimates anywhere in the documents we reviewed. This raises the possibility that the language of future clean energy can obscure the energy sources actually powering today's expansion.

D. Land, State and Capital: Tarluvada

From redistribution to acquisition

The history of Tarluvada begins with a history of land redistribution. Landless Scheduled Caste households in undivided Andhra Pradesh were assigned land under the 20-Point Programme launched in 1975. In Andhra Pradesh, the programme was implemented as the *IndirammaPathakam*. The Andhra Pradesh Assigned Lands (Prohibition of Transfers) Act, 1977 subsequently placed restrictions on the transfer of these lands, helping protect vulnerable households from alienation.

Land was also assigned to women from Below Poverty Line households through the DWACRA scheme, launched by the central government in 1982 and expanded by the Andhra Pradesh government during the 1990s. In communities that had historically experienced landlessness, these assignments provided not only an economic asset but also a degree of security and autonomy.

This protective legal framework has since undergone several amendments. In July 2023, the Andhra Pradesh legislature amended the Assigned Lands Act to grant fuller rights to Scheduled Castes who had been in possession of assigned land for more than 20 years, as well as to holders of house sites for more than 10 years. This enabled eligible households to sell or mortgage their land. A further amendment in February 2026 allowed assigned land to be leased for large solar and clean-energy projects under the Andhra Pradesh Integrated Clean Energy Policy, 2024.

The changes raise a dire consequences for households living with debt and economic insecurity, the ability to sell land can also create conditions in which land becomes vulnerable to appropriation by more powerful actors.

What happened in Tarluvada?

Tarluvada is a village in Anandapurammandal in Visakhapatnam district, located in the foothills of



the Eastern Ghats. According to villagers interviewed by the solidarity team, 51 Scheduled Caste households had received two acres each through the IndirammaPathakam in the 1970s and 1980s. Women from these households subsequently received an additional acre each through DWACRA in the early 1990s.

After interacting with around 9 families of 51 in the village, villagers told the team that the land was acquired during 2024–26 for the proposed Adani–Google data centre. They also reported that they had not voluntarily consented to the transfer and that officials had pressured them to surrender their land. The community's account raises questions about compliance with the safeguards under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (LARR Act, 2013), particularly around consent, Social Impact Assessment and the treatment of assigned land. These claims require independent legal verification.

The compensation offered was initially reported to be ₹30 lakh per acre, along with proposed benefits such as three cents of homestead land, a shop in a shopping complex and employment opportunities. Following resistance, the compensation was reportedly increased to ₹40 lakh per acre. The solidarity team was informed that the promised house plots had not been provided at the time of its interaction with the community.

The accounts of the women interviewed point to a deeper sense of dispossession. One woman told the team:

> *"They have not even given us a shred of paper; but just made us sign some documents in the government office. Today we are back to being landless labourers; our future is bleak."*[16]

Another community member said that most families had little or no compensation left after repaying debts and meeting social, health and other immediate expenses.

This is an important distinction in discussions of compensation. **Land is a productive asset; compensation is a finite payment.** Once the land is surrendered, the household loses not only its present livelihood but also an asset that could have supported future generations.

The Tarluvada acquisition needs to be understood alongside changes in land acquisition policy in Andhra Pradesh and nationally. The LARR Act, 2013 introduced stronger safeguards around consent, rehabilitation, compensation and Social Impact Assessment after decades of popular struggles over land acquisition. These protections were subsequently diluted through a combination of central and state-level measures.

The Andhra Pradesh (Amendment) Act, 2018, for example, exempted certain "priority state projects" from Social Impact Assessment and consent requirements, allowing projects to be fast-tracked.[17]

Andhra Pradesh has also used land pooling and land banks through the Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC) to assemble land for industrial and infrastructure projects. According to the researchers, this creates a route through which land can subsequently be transferred to corporate projects while potentially bypassing some of the safeguards associated with conventional land acquisition.

The Tarluvada case therefore sits at the intersection of two histories: **the redistribution and dispossession of land to historically landless communities, and the subsequent consolidation of land for large-scale corporate infrastructure.**

E. Employment Promises

One of the strongest arguments made for the proposed data-centre expansion in and around Visakhapatnam is employment. Government orders repeatedly cite thousands of crores of proposed investment alongside projected or committed jobs. Yet the figures themselves raise questions. The issue is not only **how many jobs are being promised**, but what kind of employment

[16] In-person Interview, Village Community Representative, Tarluvada, 18 July 2026.
[17] IELRC, Andhra Pradesh (Amendment) Act, 2018

these projects can realistically generate, how secure those jobs will be, and whether the employment promised is proportionate to the enormous public resources being mobilised for these projects.

Take the **486 MW data centre proposed by Data Centre Holdings India LLP**. The Andhra Pradesh government's **G.O.Ms.No.56, dated 21 August 2026**, records a proposed investment of **₹58,743 crore** and an **employment commitment of 1,250 jobs**, to be achieved within 10 years.[18] On the government's own figures, that amounts to roughly **₹47 crore of proposed investment per committed job**. These are projected jobs, not jobs already created.

A similar pattern appears in the **512 MW AM AI Factory project** at Amanam. **G.O.Ms.No.59, dated 22 August 2026**, records a proposed investment of **₹31,387 crore** and an **employment commitment of 1,000 jobs**.[19] The proposed **1,000 MW data centre by Renew AP Green Data Center Pvt. Ltd.** in Anakapalli is even larger: **₹85,200 crore of proposed investment for 1,880 jobs**, with the employment commitment to be achieved over **nine years and five months**, according to **G.O.Ms.No.55.**[20]

The contrast becomes sharper when we look across these projects together. Five government orders that explicitly state both investment and employment figures (the Data Centre Holdings India, AM AI Factory, Renew AP Green, Sify and CtrlS projects) amount to approximately **₹1.93 lakh crore in proposed investment and 4,890 jobs**. That works out to roughly **₹39.5 crore of proposed investment for each stated job**.[21] This is only a calculation from the figures in the government orders, not a government estimate. The variation between projects is considerable, but the overall question remains: **when such extraordinary levels of capital are being supported by land concessions, tax reimbursements, subsidised electricity and other public incentives, is the employment return commensurate with the public resources being committed?**

There is also a basic problem with the way "employment" enters these orders. The documents generally give us a **number**, but not necessarily a picture of the jobs behind that number. The orders cited here do not provide, in the employment figures themselves, a detailed account of wages, tenure, benefits, occupational categories, local hiring requirements or how many positions will be permanent once the facility becomes operational. That matters because a data centre has two very different employment phases: construction creates a labour demand during the building

[18] Government of Andhra Pradesh, Information Technology, Electronics and Communications (IT, E&C) Department. G.O.Ms. No. 56, dated 21 August 2026.
[19] Government of Andhra Pradesh, Information Technology, Electronics and Communication (IT, E&C) Department. G.O.Ms. No. 59, 22 August 2026.
[20] Government of Andhra Pradesh, Information Technology, Electronics and Communication (IT, E&C) Department. G.O.Ms. No. 55, 21 August 2026.
[21] Government of Andhra Pradesh, Information Technology, Electronics and Communication (IT, E&C) Department. G.O.Ms. No. 33, 29 June 2026 and abovementioned orders.

phase, while an operational data centre is a highly automated facility whose workforce is much smaller relative to the scale of the physical and financial infrastructure involved.

This makes the distinction between **construction employment and long-term employment** crucial. A large project can generate substantial work while it is being built, but construction work is often temporary and can be mediated through contractors and subcontractors, raising familiar questions of insecurity, wage levels and access to social protection. The government orders, however, do not allow us to assume that a promised number of jobs will necessarily translate into **decent, secure and locally rooted employment**. That is precisely why the quality and duration of the employment being claimed needs to be made public rather than allowing a headline job number to stand in for developmental benefit.

The Sify project illustrates another dimension. **G.O.Ms.No.37, dated 29 June 2026**, refers back to the government's order allotting land to Sify Infinit Spaces Ltd. for a data-centre project with a proposed cumulative investment of **₹15,266 crore** and the potential to create **600 jobs**.[22] The project is intended to reach a capacity of **500 MW**. Again, the government gives us the headline investment and employment figures, but not an assessment of what portion of those jobs will be permanent, what skill levels they will require, or what proportion will actually go to workers from Visakhapatnam and surrounding districts.

The CtrlS project is smaller, but the same question persists. **G.O.Ms.No.33, dated 29 June 2026**, approves a **100 MW data centre**, with proposed investment of **₹2,788.3 crore** and an **employment commitment of 160 jobs**. Here again, the important point is not simply that 160 jobs are promised, but that there is no accompanying guarantee in the order that these jobs will be permanent, secure or locally accessible.

Then there are projects where the employment question becomes even more striking because **there is no employment number at all**. The **21 July 2026 amendment concerning Reliance Industries Ltd.** relates to a proposed **₹1,08,010 crore** giga-scale AI data centre and cable landing station in Vizianagaram, and confirms the allocation of 853.97 acres at a 25% discounted rate.[23] The amendment itself contains **no stated employment figure** alongside that enormous proposedinvestment. What, then, are citizens expected to use as a measure of the project's employment benefit?

The same problem appears in the environmental approval record. The Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board's **Consent to Establishment dated 14 July 2026** for Vizag Hyperscale Data Center

[22] Government of Andhra Pradesh, Information Technology, Electronics and Communication (IT, E&C) Department. G.O.Ms. No. 29 August 2026

[23] Government of Andhra Pradesh, Information Technology, Electronics and Communications (IT,E&C) Department. G.O.Ms. No. 52, 21 July 2026

Park Ltd. describes a **₹17,700 crore, 512 MW data-centre park spread over 119.43 acres**. The order details the construction, infrastructure and environmental conditions, but contains **no stated employment figure**.[24] A project of that scale is being permitted to proceed, yet the public record available in that consent order does not tell citizens how many jobs it is expected to create.

There is, interestingly, a different kind of employment claim attached to infrastructure surrounding Google's proposed AI hub. A government order dated **11 July 2026** approved **91.38 acres** for Ecobox Industrial Asset IV Pvt. Ltd. for a logistics and light industrial park associated with Google's planned Vizag AI hub.[25] The project proposes **₹1,008 crore of investment and approximately 5,000 direct jobs**. But this is **not itself a data centre**: the complex is primarily a warehousing and light-industrial park, with 4.36 acres earmarked for data-centre and allied activities. The order says Google had identified Ecobox as its preferred development partner for logistics and service requirements associated with the AI hub. This distinction matters because employment figures associated with the wider AI ecosystem should not automatically be presented as jobs that the data centre itself will generate.

Are these employment promises enough to justify the scale of resources being committed? The proposed projects are drawing upon land, electricity, water, roads, transmission infrastructure and large fiscal incentives. Yet the employment numbers are often relatively modest, are generally projections rather than realised jobs, and are rarely accompanied by public commitments on job quality, security, wages or local hiring. In some cases, there is not even a jobs figure in the relevant government order.

The issue, then, is not simply whether data centres create employment. Surely some employment will be created. The question is what kind of employment, for whom, for how long, and **at what public cost.** A thousand jobs can look impressive when attached to a multibillion-dollar investment, but much less so when the project also demands hundreds of acres of land, enormous quantities of electricity and water, and substantial fiscal and infrastructural concessions.

For the people of Vizag, therefore, the relevant question is not merely how many jobs will we get but it is also where is the definition and nature of these jobs defined, who gets them, and are they enough to justify the land, water, energy, ecological disruption and public money being committed to these projects. Even if the promised employment materialises, the larger question remains whether such a trade-off is socially and ecologically sustainable and whether a model of development that asks communities to bear resource and livelihood costs while offering relatively limited employment can genuinely be called development.

[24] Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board. Order No. 680/APPCB/CTE/RO-VSP/HO/2026, 14 July 2026.
[25] Government of Andhra Pradesh, Industries & Commerce (Infra) Department. G.O.Ms. No. 173, 11 July 2026

F. Public Money, Private AI: The Heavily Subsidised Data-Centres

The expansion of data-centre infrastructure in Visakhapatnam is being presented as a story of investment, jobs and technological progress. But the government's own orders tell another story: a steady construction of a highly preferential fiscal and infrastructural regime for some of the country's largest corporate and technology players. Over nearly a decade, Andhra Pradesh has progressively offered land concessions, tax reimbursements, power subsidies, electricity-duty exemptions, water subsidies, infrastructure support and other financial benefits to attract data-centre investments. Again, we return to the question that **who is paying for it?** The pattern begins with the Andhra Pradesh **AI & Cloud Hub Policy 2018–2020**. In January 2018, the state created a policy framework offering fiscal and non-fiscal incentives to data-centre and AI companies, including SGST reimbursement, land-related incentives and employment-linked subsidies. The framework was subsequently used to provide a special package to Adani Enterprises for data-centre parks in Andhra Pradesh.

On **12 February 2019**, G.O.Ms.No.9 approved specific concessions for Adani. The order allotted **89.69 acres at Kapuluppada at ₹1 crore per acre**, another 300 acres at ₹20 lakh per acre and 100 acres at ₹20 lakh per acre in G. Chodavaram. Adani was also allowed to make an initial payment of only 10% of the land cost, with the remainder paid in instalments.

The concessions went well beyond land. The state approved a **100% exemption from banking, wheeling and drawal charges for 20 years**, with the resulting loss of revenue to power utilities to be reimbursed from the IT, E&C Department's incentives budget. It also provided a **₹2 per-unit electricity subsidy for 12 years**, extendable by another eight years for qualifying units, and allowed 100% energy banking under special conditions.

Less than three weeks later, on **1 March 2019**, G.O.Ms.No.15 amended the package after Adani requested reconsideration of several incentives. Among the changes, the state approved **100% reimbursement of stamp duty on 489.69 acres**, with the cost to be borne by the IT, E&C Department's incentives budget. It also extended the permitted land-payment period from six to **seven annual instalments after the initial 10% payment**. The SGST concessions were similarly extensive: 100% reimbursement for the first three years and 50% for the following seven years on eligible capital expenditure, including data-centre infrastructure, electrical and mechanical equipment, civil and construction purchases, and communication and IT equipment.

The pattern did not end with the first Adani package. In **2020**, G.O.Ms.No.5 approved another package for the 200 MW integrated data-centre park at Madhurawada. It provided **100%**

reimbursement of SGST on qualifying CAPEX for seven years, alongside land and infrastructure-related concessions.[26]

By 2025, the scale had grown substantially. The Andhra Pradesh government approved a **₹22,002 crore incentive package for Google's subsidiary, Raiden Infotech**, connected to the proposed AI data-centre development in Vizag. The government's October 2025 order records an initial allotment of **480 acres**, later expanded to 601.4 acres through subsequent orders, for AI data centres with a proposed investment of ₹87,520 crore. Contemporary reporting on the government-approved package records concessions including a 25% land discount, capital subsidy, stamp-duty and registration exemptions, SGST reimbursements, power subsidies and exemptions from electricity-related charges.

There is an additional and important national-level development. The **Union Budget 2026–27 proposed a tax holiday up to 2047 for eligible foreign companies providing cloud services globally using data-centre services in India**, subject to specified conditions. The exemption applies from tax year 2026–27 through 2046–47. This is not an Andhra Pradesh-specific concession to Google, but it forms part of the wider policy environment in which India is seeking to attract global cloud and AI infrastructure.

The concessions have become even larger in 2026. In **G.O.Ms.No.30**, concerning Reliance Industries' proposed giga-scale AI data centre, the state recommended **853.97 acres at a 25% discount on land value**. The package included a **6% capital subsidy on machinery and equipment capped at ₹4,500 crore**, 100% net SGST reimbursement on construction capped at ₹2,527.38 crore, and another **₹1,800 crore cap on SGST reimbursement for leasing costs**. It also included a 15% water-tariff subsidy, a ₹1-per-unit electricity discount for 15 years capped at ₹3,114.18 crore, a 20-year transmission-charge exemption capped at ₹5,000 crore and a 15-year electricity-duty exemption capped at ₹186.85 crore.[27]

The order for **Data Centre Holdings India LLP**, dated **21 August 2026**, provides another 200-acre allocation at a **25% discount**, a capital subsidy of up to **₹1,800 crore**, and SGST reimbursements capped at ₹703.44 crore for construction and ₹848 crore for leasing. Its power package includes a ₹1-per-unit discount for 15 years capped at **₹4,800 crore**, electricity-duty exemption capped at ₹410.41 crore, and exemption of renewable and carbon-free energy access charges capped at ₹983.45 crore. The state also agreed to fund an estimated **₹4.5 crore road connection to the site** from the ITE&C Department's budget.

The **22 August 2026** order for AM AI Factory provides another example: a **10% capital subsidy capped at ₹300 crore**, 100% SGST reimbursement on construction capped at ₹490 crore, 20-year

[26] Government order — G.O.Ms.No.5, 23 November 2020
[27] G.O.Ms.No.30 — Reliance Industries incentive package, 20 May 2026

transmission and wheeling-charge exemption capped at ₹1,250 crore, electricity-duty exemption capped at ₹90 crore and Cross-Subsidy Surcharge exemption capped at **₹3,000 crore**, along with a 30% OPGW fibre-access discount.

Land pricing itself raises another question. In 2019, Adani's Kapuluppada land was priced at **₹1 crore per acre**. In **G.O.Ms.No.37, dated 29 June 2026**, the state approved an additional 25 acres for Sify Infinit Spaces at **₹50 lakh per acre**. The order explains that the ₹50 lakh rate was being carried forward from Sify's earlier allotment, but it does not set out the underlying basis for why that rate was half the ₹1 crore per-acre rate recorded for the earlier Adani allotment. This does not by itself establish that the government "halved" an existing price; it does, however, establish a **large differential in land pricing between data-centre projects that the orders do not explain in comparable terms**.

Another financial concession became explicit on **30 July 2026**, when the government exempted stamp duty and registration charges on transactions involving three Adani-linked data-centre SPVs across **601.4 acres**. The Registration and Stamps Department calculated the resulting fiscal implication at **₹20.56 crore in stamp duty and ₹2.64 crore in registration fees**, a combined approximately **₹23.20 crore**.

Taken together, these orders show a consistent policy direction: the state is not merely permitting private infrastructure to be built. It is **actively lowering the cost of that infrastructure through public land, tax reimbursements, subsidised electricity and water, waived charges and publicly funded infrastructure**. The scale increases over time, from the 2018 policy framework, through the Adani packages of 2019 and 2020, to the much larger Google/Raiden, Reliance and other tailor-made packages of 2025–26. This matters because infrastructure policy is also a question of political economy. The state has a legitimate role in regulating large infrastructure precisely because such projects depend upon resources that are not private in origin: land, water, electricity networks, roads, transmission systems and public revenue. When these resources are mobilised at highly preferential rates for large corporations, the question is not whether investment is welcome. The question is **what public return is being secured in exchange for the concession**.

This is particularly important when the projects are justified through claims of jobs and development. The orders themselves provide employment commitments — for example, 1,250 jobs for a ₹58,743 crore project and 1,000 jobs for a ₹31,387 crore project. That makes it possible, and necessary, to ask whether the scale of public support is proportionate to the tangible and enforceable public benefit.

The issue here is, therefore, larger than whether Vizag needs data centres. Across India, large projects involving major corporate groups repeatedly raise questions over the transfer of land,

forests, infrastructure and other public resources to private projects.[28] Together they point to a broader pattern in which the state increasingly acts as an enabler of large corporate infrastructure while questions of public accountability, ecological cost and distribution of benefits remain secondary. The central question for India's AI strategy should therefore be straightforward, **are we building AI infrastructure as a public developmental capacity, or are we using public money and public resources to underwrite private accumulation?** An AI economy cannot be called developmental simply because it attracts billions in investment. Development must also answer who controls the infrastructure, who benefits from it, what resources it consumes, what obligations the private beneficiaries have to society, and what happens when those obligations are not met.

A government that treats land, water, electricity and tax revenue as bargaining chips for global technology and infrastructure companies risks turning public policy into an investment subsidy mechanism. The challenge is not to reject technology. It is to insist that **technology serves public needs, that private investment carries its full social and ecological costs, and that the state remains a regulator accountable to citizens rather than becoming the financial facilitator of corporate expansion**. In that sense, Vizag is not simply a story about data centres. It is a test of what India's AI future is going to look like: **public infrastructure for public purposes, or public resources mobilised for private profit.**

PART 3: IT'S NOT JUST VIZAG

The Resistance Is Global

The pattern upon expansion of AI Data Centers is concrete and established. We see countries that embraced data-centre expansion early. We see the same infrastructure push is now moving rapidly into the Global South. Everywhere, communities are confronting similar pressures: rising demand for water and electricity, environmental damage, disruption of local life, and decisions taken with little meaningful participation from those who have to live with the consequences.

Ireland offers an early warning. Dublin now has more than 120 data centres, and these facilities account for around **21% of the country's metered electricity consumption**, a figure expected to rise to 30% by 2030. This quickly became a source of public discontent. Residents have raised

[28] Sagar. (2026, July 1). *Imbalance of power: How the Modi and Nitish governments put Adani Power before the people of Bihar*. The Caravan.
Express News Service. (2026, August 11). *Maharashtra clears 83,700 sq ft forest land for 2 Adani Group projects*. The Indian Express.

concerns about noise, water use and environmental pressure, while researchers estimated that the growth of data centres added an average of **€360 (Rs. 46,600 approx.) to household electricity costs between 2015 and 2023**, amounting to as much as **€715 million (Rs. 92,600 approx) across Irish households**. In other words, the costs of powering this infrastructure do not simply disappear; they eventually find their way into people's everyday lives.[29]

The United States is seeing an even more visible mobilisation. On 18 July 2026, opponents organised **142 protests across 42 states** against the rapid expansion of data centres.[30] A survey pointed out that **just 14% of Americans said they would support an AI data centre being built in their own community**. The protests have focused on water use, electricity demand, environmental impacts, tax concessions and the lack of transparency around projects. In California's Imperial County, for example, a proposed data centre could consume **260 million gallons of water a year from the Colorado River**, a striking demand in a region already facing serious water pressures. The issue has also entered electoral politics. In several US states, data centres have become a campaign issue, with politicians calling for tighter rules, moratoriums and greater scrutiny. The growing political response is significant because it shows that the controversy can no longer be dismissed as opposition from a handful of nearby residents. The buildout has become a wider public question.

Britain tells a similar story. Around **140 data centres have sought electricity connections that could require 50 GW of power**, more than the country's reported peak demand of 45 GW at the time cited by Reuters.[31] Activists have organised protests around concerns over electricity, water, land and local environmental damage. In Cardiff, residents have objected to a proposed facility close to homes and public infrastructure, while campaigners have also raised concerns about gas turbines, noise and heat. In one neighbourhood, a campaigner found that **only 15% of residents knew about the proposal** despite the formal consultation process.

The same tensions are now visible in India. In **Thane**, residents have organised against Amazon's proposed data centre on a 53-acre site in a densely populated part of the city. Their concerns range from water and electricity to heat, pollution and noise, including the presence of nearly **190 diesel generator sets**. Residents have also questioned whether a facility of this scale is appropriate in the middle of an already dense urban settlement.[32]

[29] Burgess, A. (2026, June 15). *Locals affected by Ireland's AI data centre boom share 'cautionary tales'*. ABC News.
[30] Volcovici, V., & Baertlein, L. (2026, July 18). *Data center opponents stage 142 protests across 42 US states*. Reuters.
[31] Jessop, S. (2026, February 27). *UK activists plan protests over climate, social impacts of AI data centres*. Reuters.
[32] Tirodkar, A. (2026, August 7). *Why Thane residents are opposing Amazon data centre*. Frontline

Chennai presents another dimension of the problem. The city is being promoted as one of the important data-centre and AI hubs, but it is also a city that has experienced severe drought, floodingand recurring water shortages.[33]*Down To Earth*[34] points to the tension between new demands from AI infrastructure and existing pressures on water and electricity systems. It also raises questions about the number and quality of jobs such facilities create relative to the scale of land, energy and infrastructure they require.

The experience of **Cerrillos in Chile** shows that organised resistance can do more than delay a project. It can stop one. Residents formed MOSACAT after learning about Google's proposed **US$200 million data centre**, raising concerns about its planned use of **169 litres of water per second** in a region already experiencing severe drought. Google had purchased water rights for as much as 228 litres per second.[35] The community challenged the environmental approval process, organised legal support and continued campaigning for years. Seven years after the project was proposed, the original data centre has still not been built.

The Chilean case is particularly revealing because the dispute extended beyond water. Residents questioned the regulatory process itself and argued that environmental rules were being bent around the project. They also challenged the claim that data centres automatically bring broad local prosperity, pointing to their limited employment generation. Their experience led them to push for stronger environmental assessment, enforceable limits on water and energy use, and a meaningful role for communities in deciding whether such projects can go ahead.

Across these very different places, the details vary, but the grievances repeatedly converge. A town facing water scarcity is asked to accommodate a thirsty industrial facility. A city already struggling with electricity demand is expected to make room for another large consumer. Agricultural or public land is converted. People discover a project only after plans are well underway. Promised jobs turn out to be fewer, or less secure, than advertised. And when communities raise objections, they often find that the machinery of government is already moving faster than the process of public deliberation.

This is why the resistance cannot be treated as a series of isolated local disputes. It is a response to a model of technological expansion in which the demands of AI are being translated into demands on ordinary material resources, and those demands are increasingly being pushed into places already dealing with inequality, resource stress and ecological crisis.

[33] Dutta, A. (2026, July 4). *The hidden cost of Chennai's data centre boom: Can the city afford AI's water and power hunger?* Down To Earth.
[34] Srinivasan, S., & Sebastian, T. (2026, August 21). *Thirsty data centres, thin regulation: Who is watching India's water?* Down To Earth.
[35] Rüsberg, R. (2026, June 26). *"We saw a state apparatus completely subordinated to corporate interests"*. Down To Earth.

For the Global South, the warning is particularly sharp. The infrastructure that powers the AI boom may be physically located in our cities, but the priorities driving it are often set much further away. The land, water and electricity are local; the expansion is global.

Vizag sits squarely within this emerging conflict. Andhra Pradesh is presenting the city as a future hub for AI and large-scale data-centre infrastructure. But that vision cannot be separated from the people who live there. **A "City of Destiny" cannot be built by overriding the people whose homes, land, water and livelihoods make up the city in the first place.** The growing resistance (from Chile to Ireland, from Britain and the United States to Thane and Chennai) shows that this is not simply a Vizag problem. It is part of a wider struggle over the direction of technological development and the increasingly heavy material footprint behind the promise of AI. That is why the resistance in Vizag deserves solidarity beyond the city.

The Alarming Tone is Valid

The common thread across these struggles is not simply opposition to a particular building. It is the growing realisation that the AI boom is being advanced through an extraordinary concentration of corporate power, backed by states that are actively opening up land, water, electricity, subsidies and public infrastructure to private expansion. The state is not a passive bystander in this process. It is making resources available, changing regulations, fast-tracking projects and, in many cases, failing to ask whether communities can absorb their costs. At the same time, there is remarkably little evidence that the people asked to give up these resources will see anything close to an equivalent social benefit. Promises of jobs and development cannot substitute for that question.

And the democratic problem becomes even more serious when **dissent itself begins to be treated as a problem**. In Vizag, criticism of the proposed data centres has faced restrictions on social media content, including the blocking of videos documenting the experiences of affected communities. Human Rights Forum has reported that posts criticising the projects were restricted following government notices, while the Internet Freedom Foundation has challenged the blocking of a video on the Tarluvada project that had received around 2.6 million views. In August, police also prevented a peaceful environmental awareness procession against the data-centre expansion.

So we are left with a deeply unsettling question. **What space is left for communities when their land and water can be taken, public resources can be redirected, environmental safeguards can be weakened, and even the act of objecting can invite surveillance, censorship or obstruction?** The question becomes even more urgent because of the sheer speed and reach of AI itself. The same technology that can suggest a recipe for dinner can also be deployed in systems of warfare, surveillance and mass violence. A technology with such extraordinary power cannot be allowed to develop behind closed doors, in the hands of a few giant corporations, while governments compete to offer them ever greater access to public resources.

The demand, therefore, is not to stop imagining the future. **It is to refuse a future in which technological progress is built through the dispossession of people and communities, without their consent, while the state retreats from its responsibility to regulate corporate power but remains intensely active in transferring public resources to private hands.** At a time when AI is advancing this rapidly, and its consequences can reach this far, transparency, environmental safeguards, public accountability, and meaningful community consent are not optional. They are the minimum conditions for deciding what kind of technological future we are willing to live with.

For Vizag, this question is immediate. Andhra Pradesh may be trying to establish the city as a major destination for AI data centres, but **a "City of Destiny" cannot be imagined as a corporate AI hub while the people who inhabit that city are pushed aside, their resources committed elsewhere, and their dissent constrained.** The resistance in Vizag deserves solidarity precisely because it is part of a much larger struggle to ensure that the future of technology is not decided only by those powerful enough to build it.



The Solidarity Team Members

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

The rapid expansion of AI and digital infrastructure is reshaping landscapes and resource priorities in ways that increasingly affect local communities. In Visakhapatnam, the proposed hyperscale Data Centre has become a focal point of concern, with questions emerging around the use and control of land and water, energy consumption, ecological impacts, livelihoods, and the space available for communities to participate in decisions that directly affect them. The growing opposition to the project reflects wider concerns about the social and environmental costs of large-scale digital infrastructure and the pressures it places on shared resources and community rights.

This report emerges from a solidarity visit to Visakhapatnam in August 2026, bringing together organisations and individuals interested in understanding these developments from the perspective of communities on the ground. Through conversations with residents, community groups, and campaigners, the visit sought to document their experiences, concerns, and resistance. The report brings these perspectives together alongside relevant materials and resources, offering an account of the wider struggle surrounding Data Centres and the implications of AI-led infrastructure expansion.