



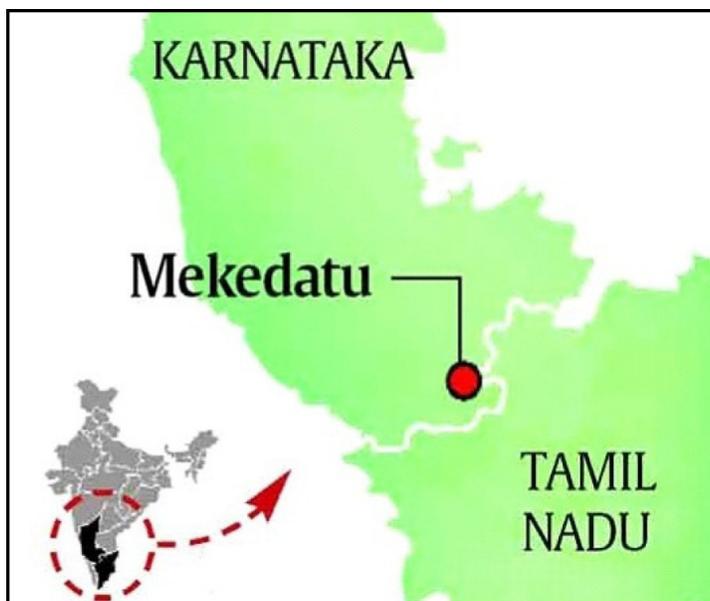
Mekedatu Project

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Why in News

The Karnataka government is likely to pressurise the Centre for approval of the construction of the **Mekedatu Project on the Cauvery river.**

- Mekedatu, meaning **goat's leap**, is a **deep gorge** situated at the **confluence of the rivers Cauvery and its tributary Arkavathi.**
- **Ontigondlu** is the proposed reservoir site, situated at **Ramanagara district in Karnataka** about 100 km away from Bengaluru. It is the **midst of the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary.**
- The **Rs. 9,000 crore** project aims to **store and supply water for drinking purposes** for the Bengaluru city. Around **400 megawatts (MW) of power** is **also proposed to be generated** through the project.



Key Points

- The project was **first approved by the Karnataka** state government in **2017.**

- It received **approval from the erstwhile Ministry of Water Resources** for the detailed project report and is **awaiting approval from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.
 - The approval from MoEFCC is crucial because **63% of the forest area of the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary will be submerged**.
 - 5,051 hectares of forests would be submerged, including 3,181 hectares in the sanctuary and 1,870 hectares in the reserve forest.
- **4.75 thousand million cubic feet of water could be drawn** from the reservoir to partially meet the drinking needs of Bengaluru.
- **Tamil Nadu has approached the Supreme Court (SC)** against the project even if Karnataka has held that it would not affect the flow of water to Tamil Nadu.

In **June 2020**, during the **Cauvery Water Management Authority's meeting**, Tamil Nadu reiterated its opposition to the project.
- **Reasons for Opposition by Tamil Nadu:**
 - Tamil Nadu is opposed to **any project being proposed in the upper riparian** unless it was approved by the Supreme Court.
 - **Karnataka has no right to construct** any reservoir on an inter-state river **without the consent of the lower riparian state** i.e. Tamil Nadu in this case.

The project is **against the final order of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT)** in which the SC held that **no state can claim exclusive ownership or assert rights to deprive other states of the waters of inter-state rivers**.
 - The CWDT and the SC have found that the **existing storage facilities available in the Cauvery basin were adequate** for storing and distributing water **so Karnataka's proposal is ex-facie** (on the face of it) **untenable and should be rejected** outright.
 - It has also held that the reservoir is not just for drinking water alone, but to increase the extent of irrigation, which is in **clear violation of the Cauvery Water Disputes Award**.

Source: TH