Impacts of SC’s Cauvery Water Sharing Verdict

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n
- Supreme Court has pronounced its historical verdict on the long-standing Cauvery water sharing dispute. Click here to know more.
\n
- This verdict will have an impact over other water sharing tribunals.
\n

\n\n

What is the significance of recent rulings of SC?

\n\n

\n
- The text of the judgment reveals several new strands for interpretation of complicate disputes over water-sharing arrangements in other tribunals.
\n
- The court reiterated that the Central government must form a Cauvery Management Board to implement a mechanism to ensure that water is shared fairly among all States.
\n
- Earlier States have cited the historical patterns of water-flow within their borders to bolster claims for a greater portion of water.
\n
- But with its new ruling SC made it clear water cannot “belong” to a particular State.
\n
- In this case, the court has stressed that water-sharing between regions should be based on fairness and equity.
\n
- Historically, water-sharing has been about catering to the needs of farmers, but SC invoked that it’s the right to drinking water.
\n

\n\n

What are the reasons behind SC’s ruling?

\n\n

\n

- In its verdict, the court said Bengaluru, being a large urbanised agglomeration, had the right to be able to reliably access water to meet residents' drinking requirements.
\n
- The court reasoned that Tamil Nadu had 20 tmc ft of groundwater that had not been accounted for in water-sharing pacts, and this too needed to be included in calculations.
\n
- SC is emphasising on modern water-management principles, which put a superiority on ensuring that groundwater resources are not over-exploited.
\n

\n\n

How would recent ruling impact other water disputes?

\n\n

\n

- In the case of disagreement between Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan over the sharing of the Ravi-Beas river system.
\n
- In 2004, Punjab unilaterally terminated a historic agreement. Haryana demanded water from Punjab on the grounds that it needed water for the arid regions in the south.
\n
- However, several parts of Haryana are far more urbanised and therefore have greater water needs and Punjab, merely by its geographical location, could not have a natural right to the Ravi-Beas.
\n
- While the States are still locked in disputes in courts, this lack of historical rights bolstered by the Cauvery ruling could mount more pressure on Punjab to keep its side of the bargain.
\n
- On the other hand, several parts of Punjab are among the most over-exploited groundwater blocks.
\n
- Prompted by the Cauvery judgment, Punjab could ask that Haryana too utilise greater quantities of its groundwater reserves.
\n
- The Mahanadi tribunal, intended to devise a water-sharing arrangement between Odisha and Chhattisgarh, could imbibe principles touched upon in the Cauvery judgment.

\n

\n\n

What is union government’s stand on Tribunals?

\n\n

\n
- The Centre has presented a Bill in the Lok Sabha to subsume all tribunals under one.
\n
- This is because, it says, tribunals are tardy and composed entirely of members of the judiciary.
\n
- A new set-up will have non-judicial experts, which will avoid looking water sharing disputes from a legal view-point.
\n
- It will give more weight to ecological concepts such as the water basin’s capacity, environmental flows and groundwater management.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

