Scheme for Sharing Cauvery Waters

What is the issue?

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- The draft scheme for sharing Cauvery Waters has been presented by the union government to the Supreme Court.
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- It is now for the Cauvery basin States to quickly embrace the scheme to avoid further bickering and rioting.
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What are the broad contours of the scheme?

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- The Centre has finally submitted a draft scheme in the Supreme Court for distribution of Cauvery waters among the riparian States.
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- While the centre has given no name for the scheme, it derives largely from the pronouncement of the 2007 Cauvery Tribunal's.
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- It will be a two-tier structure, with an apex body charged with the power to ensure compliance, and a regulation committee that will monitor the flows.
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- The powers and functions of the authority are fairly comprehensive and its decisions are intended to be final and binding.
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- However, if any States is not cooperative, the authority has to seek the Centre's help, and the Centre's decision will be final in such a scenario.
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- The authority's powers include apportionment, supervision of operations of reservoirs and regulation of water releases.
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What are some concerns?

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- **Final Say -** The clause involving the central government's envisioned role in case of non-compliance by any state is tricky.
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- While this has been envisioned to solve the problem, there is the possibility of the centre taking a partisan stand in the future due to political considerations.
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- Rather, strict compliance with the court's allocated share of water at all times would be better, instead of leaving situations to the centre's discretion.
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- **Differences -** There are a few differences between the Cauvery Management Board envisaged by the Tribunal and the authority proposed in the scheme.
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- The Tribunal favoured the chairperson being an irrigation engineer with not less than 20 years of experience in water resources management.
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- But the present scheme envisions a senior engineer in water resources management or an officer in the rank of "Secretary" at the union level.
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- Similarly, the representatives from the four States would be administrators rather than engineers as proposed by the Tribunal.
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How does the future look?

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- The Cauvery dispute has dragged on for several decades, and it would be unfortunate if the final decision isn't implemented in letter and spirit.
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- All States should agree to the broad contours of this scheme and comply with the authority's decisions.
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- If the proposed draft is implemented, then an issue concerning the livelihood of millions will be taken out of the sensationalist political domain.
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Source: The Hindu

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