Mekedatu Problem

Why in news?

Central Water Commission (CWC) allowed the Karnataka Cauvery Neeravari Nigam to prepare a detailed project report (DPR) on a nearly Rs. 6,000 crore plan to build a balancing reservoir-cum-drinking water project across the Cauvery at Mekedatu.

What is the purpose of the project?

- The project envisages building a balancing reservoir with storage of 67 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft).
- It would also supply drinking water to Bengaluru and Ramanagaram districts, besides generating power.
- The proposal received the Karnataka Cabinet's approval in February 2017 and the feasibility report was submitted to the CWC.
- The project could be completed in 2-3 years after construction begins, if all approvals are in place.

Why does Karnataka want this?

- Karnataka has been contending that there is a need to augment capacity to store excess water in monsoon surplus years.
- The recent heavy rain and floods resulted in Karnataka releasing excess water from the Cauvery to Tamil Nadu.
- This led to the State intensifying its efforts to build the Mekedatu reservoir.
- The reservoir would help store excess water which can be released to Tamil Nadu during dry months, besides taking care of drinking water requirements of cities and towns of Karnataka.
- The excess water is of no use even to Tamil Nadu as it would run off into the sea.
- Water inister of Karnataka maintained that the project would not affect water release to Tamil Nadu, nor would it be used for irrigation.

Why is Tamil Nadu opposing it?

- Tamil Nadu fears that Karnataka's move to create more storage facilities would effectively prevent the flow in the Cauvery, the lifeline for agriculture in delta districts, besides being a major drinking water source for several

districts.

- Farmers' organizations fear this could turn the fertile Cauvery delta into a desert.
- The State was quick to move the Supreme Court for a direction to the CWC to withdraw its letter of permission and restrain Karnataka from proceeding with the preparation of the DPR.
- The State also sought to initiate contempt proceedings against the CWC chairman, the Karnataka Water Resource Minister and others for "wilful disobedience" of the Supreme Court and Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal verdicts.
- The petition said that the cnstruction of any new dam by Karnataka would alter the adjudication to the distribution of 10 daily/monthly releases to Tamil Nadu.
- The TN government convened a special session of the Assembly to pass a unanimous resolution calling upon the Centre to direct the CWC to withdraw the permission.

What was Karnataka's response?

- Karnataka termed the challenge misconceived, obstructive and factually baseless.
- It rejected Tamil Nadu's claims that the tribunal order barred the project and maintained that the reservoir would not affect the downstream flow in the river or jeopardize the livelihood of farmers.

Source: The Hindu

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