

## **2. Mekedatu Issue**

**Prelims Syllabus:** Rivers

**Mains Syllabus:** GS-II Functions and Responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers and Finances up to local levels and Challenges therein.

### **Why in News?**

- Tamil Nadu has rejected the idea for an exclusive discussion by the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) on the Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir-cum-Drinking Water Project proposed by Karnataka reiterating its position that there should be no discussion on the subject, which was sub judice.

### **What's the Issue?**

- Tamil Nadu has protested against Karnataka's move to build a reservoir on river Cauvery at Mekedatu. However, the Karnataka Government has asserted that there is no "compromise" on the Mekedatu project and the state wants to undertake the project.

### **Water sharing between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu:**

- Karnataka is supposed to release Cauvery water from three sources:
  - ✓ One being the water flowing in the areas downstream River Kabini, catchment areas of Krishnarajasagar reservoir, the sub-basins of Shimsha, Arkavathi, and Suvarnavathi rivers, and the water from minor rivers.
  - ✓ Secondly, water is released from Kabini dam.
  - ✓ The third source is water that is released from Krishnarajasagar dam.
- In the case of the second and third sources, which are under the control of Karnataka, water is released to TN only after storing sufficient water for their use.
  - ✓ Since there is no dam in the first source, water from these areas have been freely flowing into TN without a hitch.
  - ✓ But now, TN state government felt that Karnataka was "conspiring" to block this source as well through the Mekedatu dam.
  - ✓ Mekedatu zone represented the last free point from where Cauvery water flowed unrestricted into the downstream state of TN from the upstream Karnataka.

### **About the Project:**

- Mekedatu is a multipurpose (drinking and power) project.

- It involves building a balancing reservoir, near Kanakapura in Ramanagara district in Karnataka.
- The project once completed is aimed at ensuring drinking water to Bengaluru and neighboring areas (4.75 TMC) and also can generate 400 MW power.
- The estimated cost of the project is Rs 9,000 crore.

### **Why Tamil Nadu is Against this Project?**

- It says, 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.

### **Award by the tribunal and the Supreme Court:**

- The tribunal was set up in 1990 and made its final award in 2007, granting 419 tmcft of water to Tamil Nadu, 270 tmcft to Karnataka, 30 tmcft to Kerala and 7 tmcft to Puducherry. The tribunal ordered that in rain-scarcity years, the allocation for all would stand reduced.
- However, both Tamil Nadu and Karnataka expressed unhappiness over the allocation and there were protests and violence in both states over water-sharing.
- That saw the Supreme Court take up the matter and, in a 2018 judgment, it apportioned 14.75 tmcft from Tamil Nadu's Earlier share to Karnataka.
- The new allocation thus stood at 404.25 tmcft for Tamil Nadu while Karnataka's share went up to 284.75 tmcft. The share for Kerala and Puducherry remained unchanged.