

Hindustan Times- 30- September-2023

K'TAKA ASKED TO STICK TO CAUVERY FORMULA AS STIR PARALYSES STATE

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NEW DELHI: A top panel mandated to oversee sharing of water between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu on Friday asked the former to follow directions issued earlier by a regulatory body to release water to its neighbour from the Cauvery basin, deepening discord between the states.

Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah said the state will move the Supreme Court over the issue

Meanwhile, farm organisations and pro-Kannada groups called a shutdown in Karnataka on Friday, halting normal life in Bengaluru, to protest against the directions to release water to Tamil Nadu.

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Follow directive on release of Cauvery water to TN, says panel; K'taka to challenge order in SC

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NEW DELHI: A top panel mandated to oversee sharing of water between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu on Friday asked the former to follow directions issued earlier by a regulatory body to release water to its neighbour from the Cauvery basin, deepening a major discord between the two southern states, a person familiar with the matter said.

In a meeting held in Delhi to resolve a logjam that has sparked tensions in the two states, the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) upheld the regulatory committee's directions to Karnataka to release 3,000 cusecs [cubic feet per second] of water to Tamil Nadu from September 28 to October 15.

Karnataka must follow a September 26 directive by the Cauvery Water Regulatory Committee (CWRC) to release the required water to Tamil Nadu, the authority ruled. The mandate of providing 3,000 cusecs water to Tamil Nadu for an 18-day period took effect on September 28, the day on which its earlier mandate to Karnataka to release 5,000 cusecs for a 15-day period ended.

Karnataka, however, did not comply with the directions, citing severe water scarcity in the state. Reports in recent days, citing India Meteorological Department



Kannada activists burn an effigy of Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin, in Karnataka's Chikmagalur, on Friday.

PTI

(IMD) data, have said that districts in the Cauvery catchment area have registered a rain deficit of at least 32%.

Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah said the state will challenge Friday's decision and move the Supreme Court over the issue. "We will submit a review petition, stating our inability to release water, to the Cauvery Water Management Authority tomorrow (Saturday), and we will approach the Supreme Court as well," he said.

Farm organisations and pro-Kannada groups called a shutdown in Karnataka on Friday, halting normal life in Bengaluru, to protest against the directions to release water to Tamil Nadu.

The Cauvery interstate basin originates in Karnataka and flows

through Tamil Nadu and Puducherry before flowing into the Bay of Bengal. Being a lower-riparian state in the basin, Tamil Nadu relies on releases by Karnataka, particularly during the monsoon, to meet its needs. During summers, Tamil Nadu comes under a rain-shadow region.

At the meeting, representatives of the Karnataka government argued that the state was battling a water crisis due to widespread drought following a poor monsoon. "Karnataka said it was not in any position to comply with the directions because of water scarcity," the person cited above said.

On September 14, after a Cabinet meeting the previous day, the Karnataka government had declared a drought in 195 talukas

of the state, including nine in the vicinity of Bengaluru. Karnataka's representatives argued, according to the person cited above. A taluk is a unit of revenue administration.

The river has been the source of more than a century of dispute between the southern states, leading to violent protests before. In 1991, the Supreme Court had issued directions to Karnataka to release water to Tamil Nadu, leading to widespread clashes in both the states.

In the meeting on Friday, Karnataka also argued that releasing more water would create a "life and death situation" and lead to extensive damage to crops. Its representatives said the water-sharing mechanism between the two states had no "distress formula", or a blueprint for water sharing during times of crisis.

The Cauvery authority, while stating that Karnataka must follow the directions to release the required water, rejected Tamil Nadu's immediate demand that Karnataka should also simultaneously release a backlog of 12,000 cusecs of water.

CWMA chairman Saumitra Haldar told Karnataka that it needed to provide, as in previous years, water till October 15 only because both the states would then start receiving rains from the winter monsoon, the person quoted above said.

The Times of India- 30- September-2023

K'taka to move SC against Cauvery panel order to release 3,000 cusecs of water daily

Anil Gejji & BV Shivashankar | TNN

TOI LINE OF NO CONTROL

SANDEEP ADHWARYU

5,000 cusecs daily to TN.

At the CWMA meeting in New Delhi, Tamil Nadu argued for the release of the "backlog" of 12.2 tmcft of water and sought 12,500 cusecs every day till October 15. The CWMA rejected the demand, with a rider that Karnataka should clear the backlog in the subsequent period, if it receives rainfall.

BJP leaders, including former CM Basavaraj Bommai and Bangalore South MP Tejasvi Surya, blamed the Congress government for its "failure" to handle the issue.

The Karnataka bandh called by Kannada groups and farmer organisations evoked a mixed response. The shutdown was near total in southern districts. In Bengaluru, commercial establishments and educational institutions remained shut. At Bengaluru airport, 22 incoming and 22 outbound flights were cancelled.

Bengaluru: The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) on Friday upheld the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's recommendation and directed Karnataka to release 3,000 cusecs of water daily to Tamil Nadu until October 15, even as Karnataka observed a bandh over the issue.

The Karnataka government has decided to challenge the decision in Supreme Court and also file a review plea before the CWMA.

"The state is not in a position to comply with the directive due to a lack of water in our Cauvery reservoirs," CM Siddaramaiah said after consultation with legal experts, including retired SC and HC judges and former advocate generals. The SC had refused to interfere with CWMA's earlier order directing Karnataka to release



The Indian Express- 30- September-2023

CAUVERY'S PEOPLE

They must come together to devise formula to share river's waters in monsoon deficient years, find long-term solutions

FIVE YEARS AFTER the Supreme Court laid down a water-sharing formula to address the needs of the Cauvery basin states, the longstanding dispute over the river's resources has flared up again. Farmers associations, civil society groups and Karnataka's Opposition parties, the Janata Dal (S) and BJP, are up in arms over the directive of the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee — the technical arm of the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA), which oversees the implementation of the SC verdict — that asks the upper riparian state to release 3,000 cusecs of water per second to Tamil Nadu. These groups staged a state-wide bandh on Friday. The Karnataka government has repeatedly expressed its inability to release water in a year in which the monsoon has played truant, especially in the state's southern interior where the Cauvery originates. The river is the main source of irrigation for farmers in Karnataka's Mandya region and provides most of Bengaluru's drinking water. Tamil Nadu, too, is dependent on it. The state has pleaded that it desperately needs Cauvery's water in the coming weeks to meet the livelihood needs of its farmers. The river is also the main source of drinking water in several districts of the downstream state. It's clear that a mechanism needs to be urgently put in place that addresses the concerns of both states in times of insufficient rainfall.

The recent flare-ups in the Cauvery basin — 1991, 2002, 2012, 2016 — have also been triggered by deficient rainfall. In a normal year, the river takes care of everyone's needs. That's why the SC's 2018 verdict was not questioned in the last five years. The Court had not stipulated a water-sharing blueprint for distress years. However, in underlining the "need for sustainable" water use and by emphasising the "principle of equity in water allocation", the SC did open up possibilities for an enduring solution in which there are no winners and losers. It had directed the setting up of an agency to administer water allocation. But the CWMA, set up about four months after the verdict, never really got around to initiating conversations amongst the Cauvery basin states on water-sharing during the poor monsoon years.

The Karnataka government has reportedly said that it will contest the CWRC's latest water allocation decision at the Supreme Court. But rather than lean on the judiciary, the Cauvery-dependent states would do well to come together and plan for the river basin, which today has to meet the competing demands of agriculture, industrialisation and urbanisation. The Delhi-based CWMA that relies largely on the expertise of engineers and bureaucrats seems ill-suited for this endeavour. Solutions ranging from disincentivising water-intensive crops to encouraging decentralised water management will require the inputs of hydrologists, economists, agri-scientists, farmers and industry bodies, and civil society groups. Most importantly, agriculturists from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu will need to talk to each other, understand each other's fears and shed their confrontational approach.