

# Mekedatu Project

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**In news :** The Mekedatu Project comes to light as the Government of Karnataka brought pressure on the central government to approve the construction of the Mekedatu balancing reservoir that has been proposed to store water for drinking purposes.

## About Mekedatu project

- Karnataka intends to build a reservoir across river Cauvery near Mekedatu in Kanakapura taluk.
- It was first proposed along with Shivanasamudra hydro power project at Shimsa in 2003 with an intention to use the water for a hydro power station and supply drinking water to Bengaluru city.
- However, Tamil Nadu objected saying Karnataka had not sought prior permission for the project. Its argument was that the project would affect the flow of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu.
- According to experts, Mekedaatu, located about 110 km from Bengaluru, could address the city's growing thirst in the near future provided neighbouring Tamil Nadu does not spoil Karnataka's plans.
- Following the green signal from the legal experts, the state government has decided to develop a 'Balancing Reservoir' or 'Mini KRS' (Krishna Raja Sagar reservoir near Mysuru) near Mekedaatu for supplying potable water to Bengaluru and parts of Mysuru region in the near future.
- Running out of options to meet the growing potable water requirements of IT capital of the country, the state government was contemplating various alternatives other than the Krishna Raja Sagara (KRS) reservoir to quench the thirst of Bengaluru.
- The state government has already floated global

expression of interest in this regard for construction of balancing reservoir at Mekedaatu and already six global firms have submitted expression of interest (EoI).

- Since it is for potable purpose, the government need not take approval from the ministry of environment and forests (MoEF) for this project.
- It is estimated that after supplying 192 tmc ft water to Tamil Nadu as per the agreement between the two states, another 250 tmc ft water flows to Tamil Nadu, which further joins the sea.
- The Karnataka government wants to tap this additional water and use it for drinking water needs of Bengaluru. It could either build one reservoir or two reservoirs with 25 tmc capacities each.
- The Rs.9,000 crore project, approved by the State government in 2017, has received approval from the Union Water Resources Ministry for the detailed project report and is awaiting approval from the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) even as Tamil Nadu has approached the Supreme Court against the project.

## Mekedatu project

Conceived in early 2000 as a hydroelectricity project

Proposed as a balancing reservoir in 2013

Cabinet clears the project in February 2017

Project involves construction of a balancing reservoir at Mekedatu, near Kanakapura, in Ramanagaram district

Located about 100 km from Bengaluru

Estimated cost (in 2017)  
₹ 5,912 crore

The reservoir will have impounding capacity of 64 tmcft

Proposed to produce 400 MW of power and supply drinking water to Bengaluru and Ramanagaram districts



A file photo of the Cauvery at Mekedatu near Kanakapura.

## Conditions laid down by the CWC

While the CWC has in principle allowed Karnataka to take up the DPR for the project, it has imposed some conditions. They include:

1. Karnataka to consider points raised by Tamil Nadu. View of other co-basin States to be taken into consideration so that inter-State issues can be resolved amicably
2. Acceptance of the project by Cauvery Water Management Authority is a prerequisite for consideration of the DPR by the Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Water Resources.
3. The DPR has to be prepared in due consultation with the Central Electricity Authority and the Central Water Commission
4. The cost of preparing the DPR to be borne by Karnataka

## Submergence of forest land

- Ontigondlu, the proposed reservoir site, in the midst of the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, as per the experts
- Ontigondlu, the proposed reservoir site, in the midst of the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary.
- 5,051 hectares of forests would be submerged and they included 3,181 hectares in the sanctuary and 1,870 hectares in the reserve forest.
- The approval from MOEF is crucial since 63% of the forest area that will be submerged is in the sanctuary

## Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary

- The Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary is a protected area located in the Mandya, Chamarajanagar and Ramanagar districts of Karnataka
- The Cauvery River passes through its midst.
- An area of 510.52 km<sup>2</sup> (197.11 sq mi) was established as

Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary on 14 January 1987 under Section 18 of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 with the objective of providing protection, conservation and development of Wildlife and its environment.

- The sanctuary was expanded to its current area of 102,753 hectares (253,910 acres) in 2013
- On its east, it adjoins Dharmapuri forest division of Tamil Nadu state.