



Cauvery-South Vellar Link project

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Why in news?

The **Cauvery-South Vellar Link project** has become a major legal and political issue in India, particularly between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, with complications arising over water rights, environmental concerns, and federal principles.

Background of the Project:

- The project seeks to divert **surplus water from the Mettur dam in Tamil Nadu** to the **Sarabanga basin in Salem district**. The aim is to address water scarcity in the region by filling dry tanks.
- Estimated at **₹565 crore**, the project is seen as crucial for Tamil Nadu's irrigation needs.
- However, **Karnataka has opposed** the project, claiming it would adversely affect its water resources, especially the Cauvery river, on which both states rely.

Karnataka's Legal Standpoint:

- Karnataka has sought a **Supreme Court** ruling to prevent Tamil Nadu from proceeding with the project. It argues that the project is part of a broader plan to claim more of the Cauvery river's water, violating previous rulings by the **Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (2007)** and the **Supreme Court (2018)**.

Federal and Constitutional Concerns:

- Karnataka contends that Tamil Nadu's actions disregard constitutional norms and undermine cooperative federalism by starting the project without the necessary approvals from the Union government.
- Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for the project in January 2021, despite the lack of required clearances, which has fueled tensions.

Current Status of Approvals:

- The **Union government has yet to grant in-principle approval** for the project, which the **Supreme Court** noted as the reason why Karnataka's request for interim relief was not considered urgent. The project is still pending federal clearance, which complicates matters further.

Inter-State Water Disputes:

- The **Cauvery river** has long been a contentious subject of inter-state water disputes. The ongoing situation reflects broader challenges in managing shared water resources and the governance of such projects across state borders.

Implications for Future Projects:

- The unresolved status of the Cauvery-South Vellar Link project highlights the need for more structured and transparent frameworks for handling inter-state water disputes and ensuring better cooperation between states.

in resource management.

Political Ramifications:

- The issue has political consequences, particularly in **Tamil Nadu** and **Karnataka**, where water disputes often become central to local electoral strategies and public sentiment. The project may influence political alliances, leadership decisions, and party positioning in upcoming elections.

Environmental Concerns:

- Diverting water from the Mettur dam raises **potential environmental risks**, such as changes in local ecosystems, impact on **agricultural practices**, and **water availability for other regions**.
- The **balance between development needs and environmental sustainability** remains a critical issue, urging the adoption of more holistic water management practices.

Cauvery-South Vellar Link project is more than just an infrastructure proposal; it's at the heart of a broader debate on inter-state cooperation, legal interpretations, environmental sustainability, and regional politics. As the project remains stalled, it underscores the challenges India faces in managing shared water resources.