Mekedatu dam 'at a decisive stage', says Karnataka CM; lower riparian Tamil Nadu keeps opposing

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News

Karnataka CM D.K. Shivakumar said on 31 Oct 2026 that the Mekedatu balancing reservoir across the Cauvery had reached a 'decisive stage'. About 2,500 acres of alternative land have so far been identified to compensate for forest land to be submerged (a committee headed by the Mandya Deputy Commissioner); about 500 acres of farmers' land will be used, and land acquisition will begin soon. Noting that Karnataka must release about 177 TMC to Tamil Nadu each year, he said the reservoir would store about 66 TMC. Tamil Nadu continues to oppose it, saying it violates the Cauvery Tribunal award and Supreme Court orders and that Karnataka cannot build it without its consent.

Key facts

Site	Ontigondlu near Mekedatu ('goat's leap'); Cauvery–Arkavathi confluence; Kanakapura taluk, Bengaluru South district; about 4 km from the TN border
Project (2019 DPR)	67.16 TMC storage; 4.75 TMC drinking water for Bengaluru; 400 MW hydropower; about ₹9,000 crore
Submergence	About 5,000 ha – mostly forest land, including part of Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary

Supreme Court (13.11.2025)	TN's pleas 'premature'; DPR to be examined by CWC, CWMA, CWRC; TN may challenge any CWC approval
Shares (2018 verdict)	TN 404.25, Karnataka 284.75, Kerala 30, Puducherry 7 TMC; 177.25 TMC at Biligundlu

Background

- History: the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) was set up on 2 June 1990 under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956. Its final award (5 Feb 2007): 740 TMC in all – Tamil Nadu 419, Karnataka 270, Kerala 30, Puducherry 7, environment 10, inevitable escape to sea 4.
- Supreme Court (16 Feb 2018): Karnataka got 14.75 TMC more (for Bengaluru's drinking water and groundwater), cutting Tamil Nadu's share to 404.25 TMC; 177.25 TMC a year must be released at Biligundlu. To implement it, the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) and the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) were set up in June 2018 under the Cauvery Water Management Scheme, 2018.
- Constitution: Article 262 – Parliament may by law provide for adjudicating inter-State river water disputes and may bar any court, including the Supreme Court, from such disputes. Union List Entry 56 – regulation of inter-State rivers; State List Entry 17 – water.
- Geography: the Cauvery rises at Talakaveri in the Brahmagiri hills of Kodagu, Karnataka. After the KRS and Kabini (a tributary rising in Wayanad, Kerala) dams, it flows past Biligundlu, enters Tamil Nadu at Hogenakkal in Dharmapuri district and reaches Mettur dam (Stanley Reservoir, 1934). At Mukkombu it splits into the Cauvery and Kollidam, and joins the Bay of Bengal at Poompuhar.

Tamil Nadu link: kuruvai and samba crops in the Cauvery delta (Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam) depend on water released by Karnataka. Tamil Nadu argues that Mekedatu would block flows reaching it from Karnataka's uncontrolled catchment. In July 2026 the State said the Supreme Court has not allowed Karnataka any unilateral construction. Puducherry (Karaikal) also opposed the DPR.

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