

'No work on Mekedatu sans CWMA nod'

Cauvery water panel must approve DPR, Union Minister Shekhawat tells all-party delegation from T.N.

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NEW DELHI

The Centre has given its assurance that Karnataka will not be allowed to carry out any construction on the Mekedatu dam project on the Cauvery river until its Detailed Project Report (DPR) is approved by the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA), according to members of an all-party delegation from Tamil Nadu who met Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Friday.

Earlier this month, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa unilaterally announced plans to go forward with the long-pending project, exacerbating Tamil Nadu's concerns that their farmers further downstream will be affected.

In what seemed a rebuff to Karnataka's ambitions, Mr.



Churning waters: The proposed dam site at Mekedatu in Ramanagara district of Karnataka. ■SUDHAKARA JAIN

Shekhawat said all parties must adhere to the approvals procedure that had been clearly laid down for such projects. "Water is an issue of engineers and science, but it has unnecessarily become an issue of politicians and sentiment," he told *The Hindu* after the meeting.

"The State [of Karnataka]

submitted its pre-feasibility report first and having studied it, CWC [or Central Water Commission] granted permission for the development of DPR in 2018. It was a conditional permission and the number one condition was that the DPR will only be accepted and considered further if it comes with the

approval of CWMA. All stakeholder States are members of CWMA," he said, adding that the DPR was submitted online in 2020 and last discussed at the CWMA's virtual meeting two months ago.

Karnataka and Telangana representatives urged that further discussions be held when the CWMA is able to

meet in person, as it is a sensitive issue, added the Minister.

The 13-member Tamil Nadu delegation, which included representatives from the opposition AIADMK and the BJP's State unit as well, was led by DMK leader and State Water Resources Minister S. Duraimurugan. They handed over a memorandum which noted that "the implementation of Mekedatu project would affect the interests of Tamil Nadu's farming community. It is an attempt to impound the uncontrolled flows in violation of the Final Award delivered by the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal as affirmed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court."

"Mr. Shekhawat assured us that there is no possibility of Karnataka going forward without CWMA approval," said Mr. Duraimurugan.