



Big blow to K'taka in Mahadayi row

SC orders setting up of Joint Inspection Committee to probe if State diverted water

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NAUSHAD BIJAPUR@Belagavi

IN a setback to Karnataka, the Supreme Court on Monday ordered the formation of a Joint Inspection Committee to investigate whether Karnataka government diverted water under the Mahadayi project in violation of the court's orders.

Goa filed a contempt petition in October last year against Karnataka for alleged breach of the court orders.

Soon after the case was heard in the SC, the Goa Chief Minister tweeted, ₹In a contempt petition filed by Goa against Karnataka on the issue of diversion of water and breach of orders of Mhadei Tribunal and SC, the SC today directed Joint Inspection Committee consisting officers of Goa, Maharashtra and Karnataka to inspect Kalasa project and submit report within four weeks."

The two states are locked in a dispute over sharing of the river's water, considered as the lifeline of Goa.

"The state government seems to be not serious about the inter-sharing water dispute cases pending before the Supreme Court. The state suffered a jolt today due to the lack of preparation by the government," said a noted Supreme Court advocate from Karnataka.

He said the state government had taken the cases in the court and tribunals over interstate water sharing issues lightly even before the BJP government came to power in the state. The government should have formed legal teams and asked the higher officials of the Water Resources Department to effectively coordinate with

the legal team at regular intervals, he added.

Recently, Water Resources Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi had stated that the Goa government would suffer a jolt for filing a false contempt petition against Karnataka. "The state government never violated the orders of Mahadayi Water Dispute Tribunal (MWDT) or of the Supreme Court in the Mahadayi issue," he had said.

The minister also had stated that Goa contention that Karnataka demolished the check-wall constructed in Kalasa nala to divert Mahadayi water illegally was far from the truth. Despite being aware of the fact, Goa needlessly filed a contempt petition levelling false allegations against Karnataka, the minister had stated.

Despite Karnataka's legal setback, the legal experts defended the state government's contention that it had not breached the court's orders. It is possible to divert the river water through Kalasa-Bandura nalas, only if a dam is constructed downstream. It is impossible to believe that any water from Mandovi (or Mahadayi) has been diverted without having a dam downstream, they said.

The Tribunal had awarded 13.02 tmcft of water to Karnataka under the Mahadayi project allowing the state to share 5.5 tmcft of water from Mahadayi river for drinking purposes and another 8.02 per cent of water for hydro electricity generation. However, Karnataka is involved in a long-stretched battle with Goa for its share of 36.55 tmcft of water, including 7.56 tmcft for drinking water purpose.