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K'taka must release water to TN, says Patkar

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Chennai: Days after the Supreme Court directed Karnataka to release 2,000 cusecs of Cauvery water every day to Tamil Nadu from October 7 to 18, environmental crusader and tribal rights activist Medha Patkar reiterated that it may be in Karnataka's best interest to do so. Halting at the city's Stella Maris College en-route her 10-day nationwide campaign for an addiction-free India, '*Nasha Mukh Bharat Andolan*', from Kanyakumari (October 2) to Bhopal (October 12), Patkar implied that as the lower riparian state, Tamil Nadu's rights were paramount, and could not be denied.

"When the upstream state stops the water flow, a minimum flow for the downstream population is a must. This is clear in The Environment Protection Act 1986, and even noted as a precondition in the conditional clearances granted to projects. Sadly, it is not followed," she said, and added, "It's not just about the conflict between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. If they (Karnataka) completely stop the water flow to Tamil Nadu, eventually, the sea will come in," she added.

At Stella Maris to deliver a special address and inaugurate a workshop on the 'Inclusion of value education in schools and colleges in Tamil Nadu', Patkar emphasised on the need to rethink the paradigm of water man-



WISE WORDS: Medha Patkar said Tamil Nadu can implement total prohibition of liquor and set up detox centres

agement in the big river valleys.

"When there are two different parties in power, as is in the case of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, or Tamil Nadu and Kerala, conflicts such as this keep burning," she said.

Drawing from her decades-old experience of fighting

against unscrupulous land grabbing and haphazard evictions, Patkar said the need of the hour was the formation of an ongoing people's forum with not just justices but eminent persons and experts — beyond the state and central governments — as part of it. "And they must focus on equitability and sustainability, so that the farmers are not left high and dry, while corporates, industries and cities continue benefiting," she said.

A prime point of contention of Patkar's visit was also, the lack of implementation of total prohibition by the state government. Even as criticism over Bihar's draconian liquor laws continue, Patkar stood her ground on the complete shut-

down of the state-run TASMAC and said it was feasible with "a full-fledged plan backed by social and political will."

"In Bihar, the prohibition law has suggested deterrent action as penalty. Some clauses may certainly lead to violation of rights and be looked into. But Tamil Nadu on its part, can implement total prohibition, set up detox centres and plan alternative sources of livelihood," she said. "It can stop huge, unwarranted infrastructure and spend stringently on administrative infrastructure. There is no dearth of resources in this country. If extravagance is avoided, Tamil Nadu will not even require the 26,000 crore it's earning out of liquor sales," she said.