

## To keep Sethu on track, DMK, allies call for a General Strike

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Pushing ahead with its demand for implementation of the Sethusamudram Shipping Canal Project, the ruling DMK and its allies on Monday called for a Tamil Nadu General strike on October 1 to put pressure on the Centre to implement the project despite all opposition.

On September 30, an all-party public meeting will be held to highlight the project's economic benefits, said a resolution passed at a meeting convened by the ruling DMK and attended by its allies. The resolution said the meeting would also "expose the religious fundamentalist force's attempt to stall the long-standing dream project";

The DMK and its allies, including Congress, Pattali Makkal Katchi and the two Left parties which met here, said in a resolution that the bandh would "send out a strong message to the Centre that the people of the state were united in their support for the project". It also cautioned the UPA Government against submitting to "communal forces" which were only attempting to scuttle the project on religious grounds. The DMK and its allies also demanded the arrest of VHP leader Ram Vilas Vedanti, who reportedly offered gold as reward for Karunanidhi's head.

Later, speaking to reporters, Karunanidhi said the General strike was primarily to urge the Centre to ignore the opposition to the project. Karunanidhi said he was "neither disappointed nor fully happy" with the Centre's actions. "That is why we have called for the General strike," he said.

He described the attack on the BJP headquarters in Chennai by DMK workers as a minor issue. "If such an attack indeed took place, it is condemnable. However, it is a minor issue magnified by the media."