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Rescuing Gharials: Mahanadi River

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Why in News

Recently, **Odisha** announced a cash award of Rs. 1,000 to conserve gharials in **Mahanadi River Basin**.



Key Points

- **About Gharials:**

- Gharials, sometimes **called gavials**, are a **type of Asian crocodilian distinguished by their long, thin snouts**. Crocodilians are a group of reptiles that includes crocodiles, alligators, caimans, and more.
- **India has three species of Crocodilians namely:**
 - **Gharial** (*Gavialis gangeticus*): **IUCN Red List- Critically Endangered**
 - **Mugger crocodile** (*Crocodylus palustris*): **IUCN- Vulnerable.**
 - **Saltwater crocodile** (*Crocodylus porosus*): **IUCN- Least Concern.**
 - All the three are listed on **Appendix I** of **CITES** and **Schedule I** of the **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.**
 - **Exception: Saltwater Crocodile populations of Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea are included in Appendix II of CITES.**
- **Habitat of Gharials:**
 - **Natural Habitat:** Fresh waters of the northern part of India.
 - **Primary Habitat:** **Chambal river** (a tributary of Yamuna).
 - **Secondary Habitat:** **Ghagra**, Gandak river, Girwa river (Uttar Pradesh), the Ramganga river (Uttarakhand) and the Sone river (Bihar).
- **Significance:** Population of Gharials are a **good indicator of clean river water**.
- **Conservation Efforts:**

Breeding Centres of **Kukrail Gharial Rehabilitation Centre in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, National Chambal Sanctuary (Gharial Eco Park, Madhya Pradesh).**
- **Threats:**
 - Increased river pollution, dam construction, massive-scale fishing operations and floods.
 - Illegal sand mining and poaching.

- **Mahanadi River:**

- **About:**

- The Mahanadi River system is the **third largest of peninsular India after Godavari and Krishna**, and the **largest river of Odisha state**.
 - The **catchment area** of the river extends to **Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Maharashtra**.
 - Its **basin is bounded by** the Central India hills on the north, by the Eastern Ghats on the south and east and by the Maikala range on the west.

- **Source:**

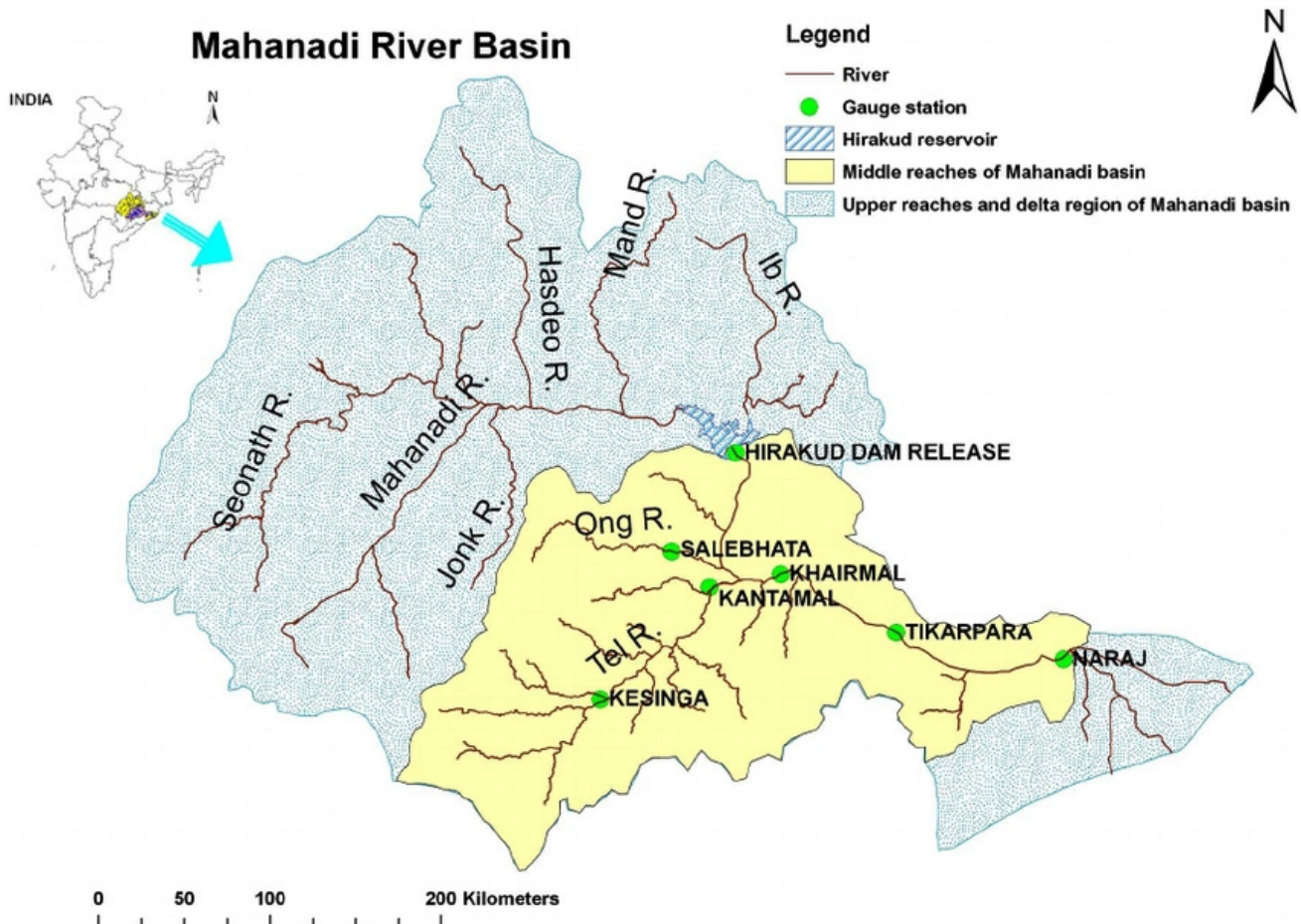
It rises from a place near **Sihawa in Bastar hills in the state of Chhattisgarh** to the south of Amarkantak.

- **Major Tributaries:** Seonath River, Hasdeo river, Mand river, Ib river, Jonking river, Tel river

- **Mahanadi River Dispute:** The Central Government constituted **Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal** in 2018.

- **Major Dams/Projects on Mahanadi:**

- **Hirakud Dam**: This is the longest dam of India.
 - Ravishankar Sagar, Dudhawa Reservoir, Sondur Reservoir, Hasdeo Bango and Tandula are other major projects.



Source: DTE