



Mains Practice Quesstions

 drishtiias.com/mains-practice-question/question-806/pnt



Q. The interlinking of rivers can provide viable solutions to the multi-dimensional inter-related problems of droughts, floods, and interrupted navigation. Critically examine.

28 Jan, 2021 GS Paper 1 Geography

Approach

- Start your answer by briefly discussing the motive of interlinking of rivers.
- Discuss its pros and cons.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

Interlinking of rivers envisions transferring water from water ‘surplus’ basins where there is flooding to water ‘deficit’ basins where there is drought/scarcity through inter-basin water transfer projects.

The northern plains of India are endowed with surplus water due to the presence of perennial rivers originating from the Himalayas. Southern and western India generally witnesses drought, as this region is drained by seasonal rivers whose water level largely depends on the Indian monsoon.

Body

Proposed Benefits of the Interlinking of Rivers

- **Hydropower Generation:** It would generate additional hydropower, which will help India fulfill its commitment to the Paris Climate Deal.
- **Round the year Navigation:** As it would address the low levels of water in southern India’s rivers, it would provide around year waterways connectivity. This will reduce the cost of transportation & levels of pollution and help in economic development.
- **Irrigation Benefits:** Interlinking of rivers will increase the country’s total irrigation potential, preventing some of the surface runoff into the sea.

Associated Concerns With Interlinking of Rivers

- **Perennial Rivers Are Not So Perennial:** A new analysis of rainfall data reveals that monsoon shortages grow in river basins with surplus water and falling in those with scarcities.
- **Federal Issue:** The spirit of federalism is ignored in the river interlinking project. Historically, there has been dissent on the part of the state governments regarding water sharing. For example, as evident from the ongoing disputes on rivers like Cauvery, Mahadayi.
- **Tensions With Neighboring Countries:** Bangladesh being a lower riparian state, is less likely to agree to India’s interlinking project. Further, India will be less likely to pressure China on its version of the interlinking river. This will eventually affect lives in north-east India.

- **High Environmental & Economic Cost:** The interlinking of rivers project, which is of a sub-continent magnitude, will incur a huge economic cost. Moreover, it would harm many ecological factors like Delta formation, growth of mangroves, and aquatic life.

Conclusion

Interlinking of rivers has its pros and cons, but given the economic, political, and environmental implications, it may not be a wise decision to carry out this project at a centralized national level. Instead, interlinking of rivers may be pursued in a decentralized manner, and more sustainable ways like rainwater harvesting should be promoted to mitigate floods and droughts.