Etalin Hydroelectric Project

For Prelims: Etalin Hydroelectric Project, Dir and Tangon river, Dibang River, Forest Advisory Committee (FAC), Environment Impact assessment (EIA), South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP).

For Mains: Significance of Dir and Tangon River, Concerns Raised Around the Etalin Hydel Project.

Why in News?

Recently, the [Etalin hydroelectric project](#) **in Arunachal Pradesh** has been scrapped in its present form.

- The plan combined **two run-of-the-river schemes** with limited storage requiring concrete gravity dams on rivers **Tangon and Dri.**
- It ran into several controversies since its inception in 2008 over concerns of [ecological damage](#)**, forest invasion and tribal displacement.**

What is the Significance of Dir and Tangon River?

- The **Dir and Tangon river**, both tributaries of the **Dibang River (tributary of Brahmaputra) in Arunachal Pradesh, India**, have the following significance:
    - **Hydrological:** Both rivers contribute to the **overall hydrology of the region** by providing water for irrigation and hydropower generation.
    - **Ecological:** The Dir and Tangon rivers support a **diverse array of plant and animal life**, including rare and endangered species.
    - **Tourist Attraction:** The scenic beauty of the **Dir and Tangon rivers,** along with the Dibang, is a major tourist destination.

What are the Concerns Raised Around the Etalin Hydel Project?

- **Environmental Impact:** The project would involve the construction of a large dam on the Dibang River, which would **submerge a large area of forest and wildlife habitat.**
    - This could lead to the **displacement of local communities**, and have significant impacts on the region's biodiversity.
- **Displacement of Local Communities:** The project would **displace thousands of people from their homes and livelihoods**, many of whom are from indigenous communities who rely on the Dibang River for their livelihoods.
- **Impact on River Ecosystem:** The project would change the natural flow of the river and affect the **fish migration and breeding.**
    - This would have a negative impact on local communities who rely on fishing for their livelihoods.
- **Geological and Seismic Risks:** The **South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP)** highlighted the **geological and seismic risks** and threats to **biodiversity in 2015**, when environmental **clearance (EC) to the project was underway.**
- **Recent Development of Issue:** The **Forest Advisory Committee (FAC)** has asked the Arunachal Pradesh government to **go back to the drawing board** and submit the plan of project again.

Forest Advisory Committee

- It is a statutory body which was constituted by the **Forest (Conservation) Act 1980.**
- It comes under the **Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC).**
- It considers questions on the **diversion of forest land for non-forest** uses such as mining, industrial projects, townships and advises the government on the issue of granting forest clearances. **However, its role is advisory.**

Way Forward

- **Community-led Approach:** The local population of the region should be consulted and should have **participation in the decision making** to ensure that the final decision making should reflect their concerns.
- **Demarcation of Ecological Sensitive Areas:** The areas which are at risk of loss of biodiversity should be **properly delineated** to ensure that they remain undisturbed.
- **Environment Impact assessment (EIA):** A proper and complete assessment of the **impact of the project on the local environment** should be studied comprehensively.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q1. On which one of the following rivers is the Tehri Hydropower Complex located? (2008)

(a) Alaknanda
(b) Bhagirathi

(c) Dhauliganga
(d) Mandakini

Ans: (b)

Q2. Where are Tapovan and Vishnugarh Hydroelectric Projects located? (2008)

(a) Madhya Pradesh
(b) Uttar Pradesh
(c) Uttarakhand
(d) Rajasthan

Ans: (c)

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