



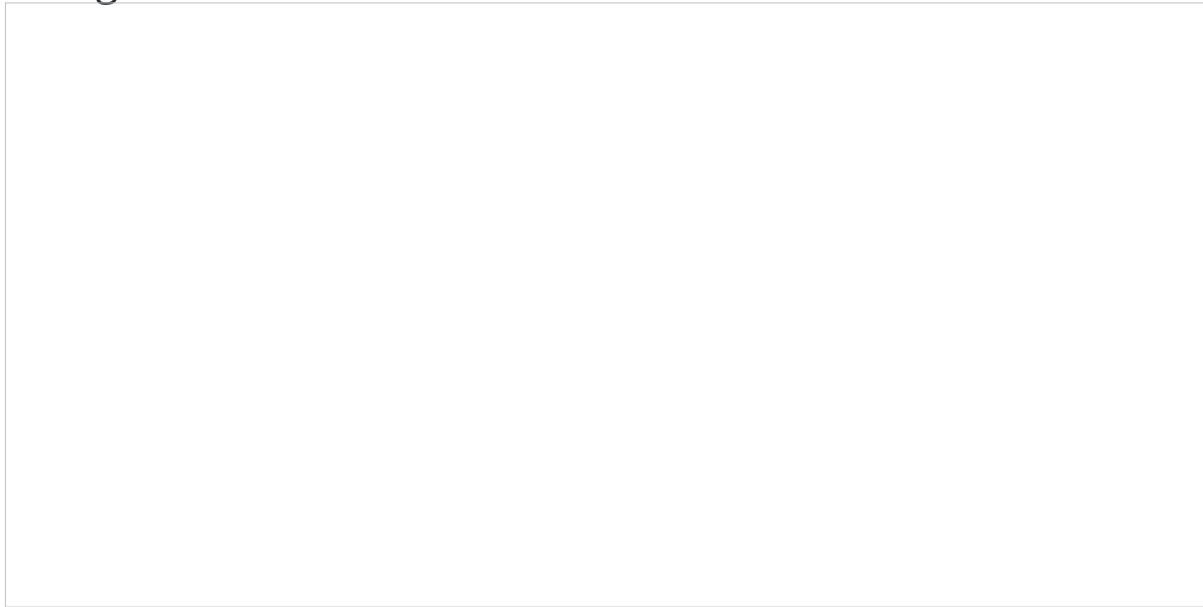
Ken Betwa Interlink Project

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Why in News?

Recently, central government has announced **90 : 10 funding pattern** for Ken Betwa Interlinking Project where 90% of the total estimated cost is to be borne by the centre.

Background



- The Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP) is the River interlinking project that aims to transfer surplus water from the Ken river in MP to Betwa in UP to irrigate the drought-prone Bundelkhand region spread across the districts of two states mainly Jhansi, Banda, Lalitpur and Mahoba districts of UP and Tikamgarh, Panna and Chhatarpur districts of MP.
 - Ken-Betwa is one of the 30 river inter linking projects conceived across the country.
 - The project has been delayed due to political and environmental issues
- Ken and Betwa rivers originate in MP and are the tributaries of Yamuna.

- Ken meets with Yamuna in Banda district of UP and with Betwa in Hamirpur district of UP.
- Rajghat, Paricha and Matatila dams are over Betwa river.
- Ken River passes through Panna tiger reserve.

Need for Interlinking of Rivers

- 80% of the water India receives through its annual rains and surface water flow happens over a 4 month period June through September.
- This **spatial and time variance in availability of natural water** versus year round demand for irrigation, drinking and industrial water creates demand supply gap, which can be balanced by interlinking of rivers.
- **Interlinking of rivers involves joining rivers by the network of canals and reservoirs** that solves **twin problems of drought and flood** by maintaining a water balance between the water deficit and surplus areas.
- Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Scheme, has already interlinked the Godavari river and the Krishna river in Andhra's West Godavari district.

Advantages

- River linking will be a solution to **recurring droughts in Bundelkhand region**.
- It will curb the rate of **farmers suicide** and will ensure them stable livelihood by providing sustainable means of **irrigation** (6 lakh hec of land) and reducing excessive dependence on groundwater.
- It will not only accelerate **the water conservation** by construction of multipurpose dam but will also produce **75MW of electricity** and will **supply drinking** water to 13 lakh people.

Few are of the view that the introduction of dam inside the water scarce regions of panna tiger reserve, will rejuvenate the forests of Panna Tiger reserve that in turn will pave the way for **Rich Biodiversity** in the region.

- It will provide **employment** during the execution of the project.
- The afforestation programme could be implemented on canal banks resulting in environmental improvement.
- The communication system will improve because of canal roads and CD works raising marketing opportunities.
- The formation of the reservoirs will help tourism development, fish and aquaculture, bird sanctuaries etc.

Concerns

- Construction of Daudhan dam will result into **submergence of 10% of critical tiger habitat** of MP's Panna Tiger Reserve that will adversely affect the tiger conservation

efforts.

- Height of the dam (77 meters) will affect the **nesting sites of vulture**.
- Construction of one of the barrages inside the **Ken Gharial Sanctuary** will adversely affect the sustainability of the sanctuary.
- **Submergence by Daudhan and Makodia** reservoirs will result into **displacement of 20,000 people** of the bundelkhand region and will give rise to rehabilitation issues.

Challenges

- **Political:** Politicization of Ken Betwa project is making project more complex and resulting into its further delay. According to the draft project report, MP was to get 2,650 million cubic metres (MCM) of water and UP 1,700 MCM. While none of the states has objection to their share, Uttar Pradesh wants more water (935 MCM) in pre-monsoon months for rabi crops and less for the monsoon months. MP, however, is not willing to release the quantity in months with the least rain.
- **Environmental:** Because of certain **environmental and wildlife conservation concerns** like passing of project through critical tiger habitat of panna tiger reserve, project is stuck in for the approval from NGT, and other higher authorities.
- **Economic:** There is a **huge economic cost** attached with the projects implementation and maintenance, which has been rising due to delays in project implementation.
- **Social: Reconstruction and rehabilitation** caused due to displacement resulting from submergence of two dams will involve **social cost** as well.

Constitutional Provisions Involved

- **Article 262(1)** of the constitution deals with the adjudication of interstate water disputes.
- **Article 262(2)** holds that neither Supreme Court nor any other court shall exercise jurisdiction in respect of interstate water disputes.
- **Water being a state subject** requires a mutual water sharing arrangement between two riparian states.

Conclusion

- Ken Betwa interlinking project can act as a **boon to the water scarce districts of the bundelkhand** region where farmers are struggling with their dependency over monsoon.
- This can even **boost the agricultural production** of the area by including water intensive, plantation and cash crops in their crop cycle that will **increase the income of farmers**.
- Project will also **curb the long pending problems of drinking water and electricity**.
- But government cannot avoid the huge **Environmental, Social and Economic cost**

involved with the project.

- Hence, before proceeding with the final approval of the project, government should comprehensively consider the **social impact assessment, which involves** proper rehabilitation of displaced people including their employment, and wages compensation.
- **Environmental impact assessment**, that includes minimal environmental loss and diversion of critical habitat.
- Apart from that formation of **River basin authority** would act as the cooperating and coordinating authority between the two riparian states and will help in accelerating the progress of the report.