



Inter-Linking of Rivers

What is the issue?

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- The Special Committee for Inter-Linking of Rivers has recently submitted its progress report.
- In this backdrop it is essential to understand what interlinking seeks to achieve.

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What was the committee for?

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- The SC directed the Centre to set up a special committee following writ petition on 'Networking of Rivers' in 2012.
- The court directed the committee to submit a bi-annual report to the Cabinet.
- It also directed the Cabinet to take appropriate decisions.

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What is the mandate?

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- The status reports are meant to be in accordance with the National Perspective Plan.
- This plan was formulated in 1980 by the Ministry of Irrigation (now Water

Resources).

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- The plan was in relation to inter-basin transfers.
- It comprises of two components: peninsular rivers development and Himalayan rivers development.
- India also has a National Water Development Agency (NWDA) (1982).
- It conducts surveys and sees how feasible the proposals for interlinking river projects are.

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What is Inter-Linking of Rivers programme?

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- A national water grid aims to connect various surplus rivers with deficient rivers.
- It aims to transfer excess water from water-rich to water-deficit regions.
- This is to help improve irrigation, increase water for drinking and industrial use.
- Mitigating drought and floods to an extent are also part of the objectives.

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What are the contents of the recent report?

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- The status report of three priority links was shared with the Cabinet. These are:

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i. Ken-Betwa

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ii. Damanganga-Pinjal

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iii. Par-Tapi-Narmada

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- **Ken-Betwa** - The project aims to link the rivers Ken (in the Bundelkhand region) and Betwa and thereby divert the surplus waters of Ken to Betwa.
- Both the rivers are flowing through Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
- It goes for meeting the water requirements in the water-deficit Betwa basin.
- Dams will be built across the Ken for storing and transferring water through the link canal.

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- **Damanganga-Pinjal** - The project aims to divert excess water from rivers in western India.
- It is to meet the domestic and industrial water requirements of Greater Mumbai.
- It proposes to move available water at the proposed Bhugad reservoir across the Damanganga and also at the proposed Khargihill reservoir across the Vagh (a tributary of the Damanganga).

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- **Par-Tapi-Narmada** - This proposes to transfer water from Western Ghats to water-deficit regions of Saurashtra and Kutch.
- This would be done via seven reservoirs proposed in northern Maharashtra and southern Gujarat.

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- It is an attempt to save water at the Sardar Sarovar project.
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- The recent committee report also talks on the status of other Himalayan and peninsular links.
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What are the concerns?

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- There are significant environmental concerns associated with inter-basin transfer.
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- The ecology of every river is unique.
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- Letting the waters of two rivers mix may affect biodiversity.
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- Besides, it involves construction of a massive network of canals and dams, which would lead to large-scale displacement of people.
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- It may make changes to agricultural patterns, and affect livelihoods.
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- In addition, rainfall patterns are changing due to climate change.
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- So the basins now supposed to be surplus, might cease to be so in few years.
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- There are financial concerns as well, related to the projects.
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- In 2001, the total cost for linking the Himalayan and peninsular rivers was estimated at Rs 5,60,000 crore.
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- The cost is now likely to be substantially higher.
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- Also, the cost-benefit ratio might no longer be favourable.
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Source: The Indian Express

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