

GEOGRAPHY

PRE-CONTEXT

RIVER INTERLINKING

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 8.

News: "River interlinking, the fount of environmental disaster."

The concept of Inter-basin transfer:

- It was proposed 130 years ago by **Sir Arthur Cotton**, who **designed irrigation dams in the Godavari and Krishna river valleys.**
- **M. Visvesvaraya, an early icon among Indian engineers, further refined this idea.** K.L. Rao and Captain Dinshaw J. Dastur subsequently expanded the scope of this concept in 1970 and 1980.
 - **Initially termed the 'National Water Grid', this concept re-emerged as the 'River-Interlinking Project' (ILR) to transfer surplus waters from the Ganga and the Brahmaputra to water-deficient regions in central and southern India.**
- **National Water Development Agency (NWDA)** was established in 1982 to conduct surveys and investigations, and to prepare feasibility reports for links under the National Perspective Plan.
 - **The NWDA identified 30 links for feasibility studies,** divided into 14 Himalayan and 16 Peninsular river links.
 - **NWDA is statutory body established** under the **Societies Registration Act of 1860**

Positives of River interlinking projects:

- **Enhanced irrigation and Agricultural Output:**
 - Interlinking could irrigate an additional 25 to 35 million hectares of land, potentially boosting food production, reduced crop failure — **NWDA report.**
- **Flood Mitigation:**
 - Diverting floodwaters from surplus basins (e.g., Brahmaputra, Ganga) to deficit basins can help moderate flood peaks, potentially reducing the impact of recurrent floods in states like Bihar, Assam, and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Hydropower Generation and Navigation:**
 - Dams/barrages along interlinked rivers can generate hydropower, helping India meet its renewable energy targets.
 - Improved Inland Navigation: Larger, navigable canals might enhance inland waterways, reducing transportation costs.
- **Boost to Rural Economy:**
 - Reliable water supply can promote agri-based industries, livestock rearing, and fishing.

Negatives:

- **Destruction of ecological services of the free-flowing rivers like:**
 - Flushing of silt from riverbeds to the coastal waters to form deltas.
 - Flood water the carrier of minerals for land fertility.
 - Groundwater recharge and sustenance of biodiversity.
 - Livelihood of millions of marginalised people.
- **Imbalance in Deltaic regions:**
 - **Delta system at the mouth of the Indus** — which was once "the richest in all Pakistan" — became impoverished when the British started barrage construction, which Pakistan continued after 1947.
 - **Case Sardar Sarovar dam** and its downstream parts.
 - **Case of Kissimmee river in Florida, USA,** an environmental disaster.
 - **Current sate of Aral Sea,** a case of how geo-engineering projects destroy natural systems, which now become a desert.

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- **Ecological Imbalance:** disrupt aquatic habitats, fish migration routes, and wetland ecosystems, groundwater recharge etc.
- **Deforestation & Habitat Loss:** Ken–Betwa link may submerge part of the Panna Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh), threatening tiger habitat and other wildlife species.
- **Climate Change Variability:** make it uncertain whether basins once deemed "surplus" will remain so in the future.
- **Forced Relocation:** Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada displaced tens of thousands, highlighting rehabilitation and resettlement challenges.
- **Inter-State Water Conflicts:** Water is a State subject, often lead to disputes in lean seasons Eg. Cauvery, Krishna-Godavari disputes.

About National River Linking Project (NRLP):

- It is an ambitious infrastructure initiative involving **30 major link projects— 14 in the Himalayan component and 16 in the Peninsular component.**
- NRLP aims to transfer water from surplus to deficit basins to address uneven water distribution and enhance water security.
- **National Water Development Agency (NWDA): Nodal agency** for river interlinking projects.

Central Water Commission:

- Functions under **Ministry of Jalshakti.**
- **Functional domains of CWC:**
 - **Appraisal of water resource projects:** pertaining to major inter-state project proposals.
 - **Basin planning and Management:** Responsible for coordination with states for establishing river basin organisations as per National Water Policy, examination of project reports etc.
 - **Flood Forecasting/ Hydrological observation:** CWC is responsible for Monitoring of Flood situation through Central Flood Control Room during monsoon period.
 - **Dam Safety & River Management.**

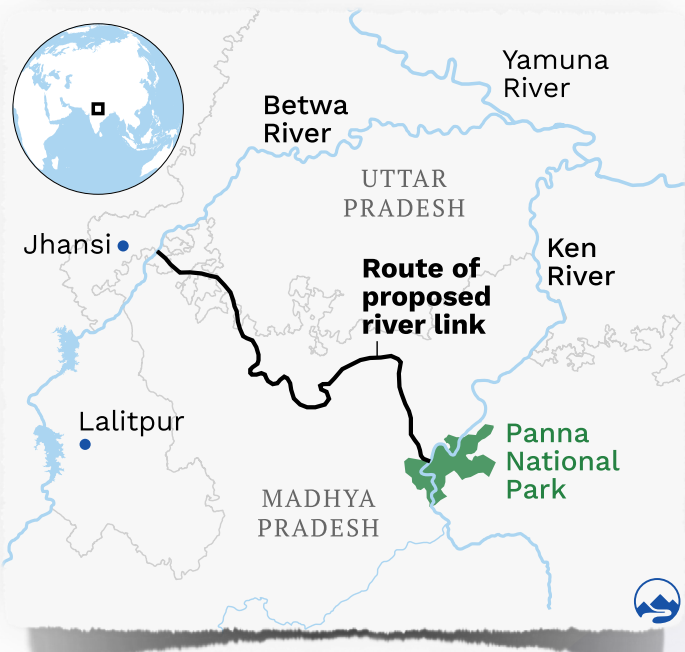
About Ken-Betwa river linking project:

- It is **expected to address drinking and irrigation water needs** of at least 10 districts of **Madhya Pradesh** and various districts of **Uttar Pradesh.**
- **Daudhan dam irrigation project (inside Panna Tiger Reserve),** expected to address irrigation needs of 11 lakh hectares in the region.
- The project aims to generate over 100 MW of **hydropower** and 27 MW of **solar energy.**
- Madhya Pradesh has become the first State in the country with **two river-linking projects under way at the moment.**
 - **Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal river-linking project** that spreads between Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.
 - **Ken Betwa river linking project.**
- KBLP was implemented due to efforts by the **Ministry of Jal Shakti** and cooperation from **Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.**

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PYQs

GS I 2020: The interlinking of rivers can provide viable solutions to the multi-dimensional inter-related problems of droughts, floods and interrupted navigation. Critically examine.



SECURITY
PRE-CONTEXT
UAPA 1967
THE HINDU, PG.NO: 11.

News: "How the UAPA, a draconian law, is wrecking lives."

About Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967:

- UAPA gives the govt. the **power to freeze, seize, or attach funds and other financial assets of individuals or entities suspected of terrorism.**
- **Under the Act, Central govt. may designate an organisation as a terrorist organisation.**
 - **UAPA 2019 Amendment:** has made it possible for the Union govt. to **designate individuals as terrorists** without following any formal judicial process.
- **Under the Act, an investigating officer is required to obtain the prior approval of the DGP to seize properties that may be connected with terrorism.**
- Under the Act, **investigation of cases may be conducted by officers of the rank of DSP or ASP or above.**
 - **2019 Amendment, additionally empowers the officers of the NIA, of the rank of Inspector or above,** to investigate cases.
- **The Act defines terrorist acts to include acts committed within the scope of any of the treaties listed in a schedule to the Act:**
 - The Schedule lists nine treaties, including the **Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (1997), and the Convention against Taking of Hostages (1979).**
 - **2019 Amendment** added International Convention for **Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (2005).**
- **The UAPA applies to both citizens and foreign nationals** who commits a UAPA crime in India or outside India.
- **A judge can deny bail under UAPA** after reviewing the police report, believing there's a high likelihood of guilt.
 - **In 2024 August, SC ruled, Courts should not hesitate to grant bail under UAPA in deserving cases: Bail is the rule, jail is the exception.**

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GS II

SYLLABUS: GROUPINGS AND AGREEMENTS AFFECTING INDIA'S INTERESTS.

INDIA-AFRICA RELATIONS

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 9.

News: "China's long game in Africa."

India and China Approach towards African nations

Diplomatic Engagements:

- **Forum on China-Africa Corporation:**
 - China's **non interference policy.**
 - **Largest multilateral platform** for **Sino-African relations.**
 - It strengthens diplomatic ties, offering financial packages, infrastructural loans, and aid.
- **India- Africa Forum Summit:**
 - Multilateral platform **reflecting India's growing interest** in Africa's, development, trade, and political stability.
 - Here **India emphasises shared values of** democracy, **anti-colonialism and South-South Cooperation.**

Towards scale of Investments:

- **China's strategy:**
 - Heavy investments with **focus on large scale projects** like ports, railways, power plants etc under **Belt and Road Initiative.**
 - Driven by **economic interests.**
- **India's engagement** is more development-focused and people centric. India's strategy centres on:
 - **Lines of credit** for smaller scale projects.
 - **Capacity building** and technical training.
 - Education and scholarships,
 - Healthcare Eg. **Pan-African e-Network Project** offers telemedicine and tele-education.

Trade and Economic relations:

- **China's trade with African nations:**
 - **Largest trading partner** surpassing \$250 billion 2021.
 - Mostly trade **restricted to Africa's natural resources.**
- **India's trade with African nations:**
 - Third largest trading partner of \$60billion in recent years.
 - **Volume of trade is smaller but diversified** with significant investments in Pharmaceuticals, IT, Agriculture, etc. rather just to raw material extraction.

Sustainability issues:

- **China's Debt diplomacy:**
 - Eg. African countries like **Zambia, Djibouti's larger portion of their GDP linked to Chinese loans.**
 - African nations may loose control over strategic assets Eg. **Hambantota Port case in Srilanka** serves as a warning.
 - Interference into local politics Eg. **Supporting authoritarian regimes.**
- **Indian investments are people centric and sustainable:**
 - But faces criticism due to their smaller scale and limited impact on infrastructure development.
 - Further, **India's engagement is often fragmented** compared to China's comprehensive, continent-wide approach.

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PYQs: CSE (M)

GS II 2021: "If the last few decades were of Asia's growth story, the next few are expected to be of Africa's." In the light of this statement, examine India's influence in Africa in recent years.



GS III

SYLLABUS: PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM- OBJECTIVES, FUNCTIONING, LIMITATIONS, REVAMPING.

PDS

THE HINDU, Pg.No: 8.

News: "The right to food and the struggle with the PDS".

Public Distribution System:

- PDS is an essential mechanism in India aimed at ensuring food security by distributing essential commodities to underprivileged at subsidy prices.
- PDS is **implemented by both Central and State Govts.**
- **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** is nodal agency under PDS.
- **Economic costs include** costs of purchasing grain, MSP, Mandi fees, taxes, packaging costs, transport costs, operational costs.
- **Procured grains go to PDS (major), Mid Day Meal, Nutrition schemes, Exports, open market sales etc.**
- Under PDS there are **different categories of beneficiaries** Eg. Households under NFSA and non NFSA (receive grains at non subsidised prices) etc.

"Despite being **major food producer** with extensive food security schemes and the **largest PDS system in world**. Still India ranks **111 out of 121 countries in Global Hunger Index 2023** placing behind Nigeria, Pakistan."

Challenges:

- **Procurement side**
 - **Procurement:** Open ended policy (no limit on procurement).
 - **Lack of storage infrastructure:** Eg. Buffer stock Overflow, rotting of grains, high carrying costs CAG audit.
 - **MSP policy:** farmers shift from coarse grains to Cereals for better remuneration.
 - **Lack of complete nutrition:** only wheat, rice. Non inclusion of Oilseeds, pulses.
- **Distribution challenges:**
 - **Coverage Issues:** Despite improvements, the coverage under NFSA still falls short of the targeted 75% rural and 50% urban population.
 - **Identification of Beneficiaries:** Inclusion errors with BPL, APL, Ghost cards.
 - **2015 order states that ration card should be issued within 30 days** of the application being filled, there are cases of people whose applications have been pending for long — between four to 18 months.
 - No regular- actual **Household Income data**.
 - **Transportation leakages:** Diversion to black markets mostly in border states. eg. Bihar to Nepal border.
 - **Fair price shop adulteration:** intermixing of high quality food grains with low quality food grains.

Suggestion: based on Justice Wadhwa Committee, Chhattisgarh Gujarat models

- **Aadhaar Linked and digitized ration cards:** online entry + tracking monthly entitlements.
- **Computerised Fair Price Shops:** Eg: POS machine.
- **DBT:** Targeted transfer of money viz Aadhar seeded bank accounts.
- **GPS technology:** To track trucks.
- **SMS based monitoring:** Aware citizens-Arrival-Dispatch etc.
- **Web based Citizen portal:** for grievance redressal.
- **PPP:** For procurement & Stocks Management.

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- **More Autonomy to FCI:** Eg: related to Stocks release, Export etc.

Reform Measures:

- Included reduction in PDS prices.
- Doorstep delivery of foodgrains.
- Digitisation of records.
- De-privatisation of PDS outlets managed by local panchayats and self-help groups.
- Inclusion of Aadhaar-based biometric authentication (ABBA).

Impact of PDS Reforms:

- **Leakage Reduction:** By 2022-23, overall PDS leakages reduced to 22%, showcasing the effectiveness of these reforms.
- **ABBA Implementation:** studies (2017 Jharkhand surveys) shows that ABBA had minimal impact on reducing ghost cards or improving purchase-entitlement ratios compared to offline systems.

NFSA 2013

- Aims to provide food security through PDS, guaranteeing subsidised grains to the majority of the Indian population under two categories— **Priority households and Antyodaya families**.
- NFSA targets to cover highly subsidised grains to 75% rural and 50% urban population. **Currently only 60% had access to PDS** under NFSA.
- Currently **81 crore persons** are covered under NFSA.

- **Types of food grains:** Rice at Rs 3/kg, wheat at Rs 2/kg and coarse grain at Rs 1/kg.

Food grain entitlements:

- **Priority household:** receives 5kg of food grain per person per month.
- **Antyodaya household:** receives 35kg of food grain per household per month.
- **In case of non supply of entitled food grains**, beneficiaries are **entitled to food security allowance** from concerned **State govt.**
- **Elders women** of the house above the age of 18 years or above is mandated to be **head of household** for the purpose of issuing ration card under the Act.

Responsibilities:

- **Central Govt.:**
 - **Procurement** of food grains by Food Corporation of India (FCI).
 - **Allocation** of required food grains to States/UTs.
 - **Transportation** of food grains from FCI godowns to Fair Price Shops (FPS).
- **State Govt:**
 - Effective **implementation** of the Act.
 - **Identification** of eligible households and issuing ration cards.
 - **Distribution** of food grains through FPS.
 - Issuance of **license to FPS**.
 - Setting up effective **grievance redressal mechanism**.

New rules:

- **Free food grains** to all 81 crore beneficiaries for 5 years, starting from January 2024 under **PM-Garib Kalyan Yojana**.

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PYQs

GS III 2022: What are the major challenges of Public Distribution System (PDS) in India? How can it be made effective and transparent.

GS III 2013: Food security bill is expected to eliminate hunger and malnutrition in India. Critically discuss various apprehensions in its effective implementation along with the concerns it has generated in WTO.



GS IV

SYLLABUS: PROBITY IN GOVERNANCE: RIGHT TO INFORMATION.

RTI

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 10.

News: "Cripple and scuttle."

"Every year, some 6 million information applications are filed in India. This shows that RTI law has initiated the vital task of redistributing power in a democratic framework and transforming the relationship between the government and citizens. An erosion of this fundamental right is an erosion of democracy."

"Failure to fill vacancies in Information Commissions across India is leading to a situation where RTI becomes a dead letter."—**Supreme Court 2023.**

RTI Implementation challenges:

- **Vacancies:**
 - **Since 2015**, despite repeated directions by the Supreme Court, **eight out of 11 posts are vacant in the CIC.**
 - **SICs are not continued functions without chiefs.** Eg. Jharkhand has no SIC since 2020 and Tripura since 2021.
 - **Non-adequate staff:** Maharashtra (2024), with a backlog of **more than 1 lakh pending cases**, six out of 11 posts of commissioners are lying vacant.
- **Pending cases:** more than 4 lakh cases pending as of 2024 with CIC.
- **RTI Amendment Act 2019:** Discretion with govt. w.r.t tenure & service conditions etc.
- **The Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023 vs RTI Act 2005**
 - **Section 8(1)(j) of RTI Act of 2005:** provides for protection of the privacy of individuals and disclosure only in public interest.
 - **DPDP Act 2023:** included an explicit provision to amend the RTI law, to exempt all personal information from disclosure.
 - **i.e Blanket Ban** on disclosure of personal information in any case.
 - This **limits the RTI's power to expose corruption, misconduct or inefficiency of public officers.**
- **Public Information Officer:** Position found confounding & non cooperative Eg: serious RTI queries that requires the intervention of higher officials are attended by PIOs.
- **Nexus with Govt.:** Appointment of some SICs is biased. They are reluctant to act against **violations of transparency.**
- **Non imposition of penalties:** in almost 95% of the cases, this **destroys the basic framework of incentives and disincentives** built into the RTI Act.
- **Failure of Whistleblower protection Act 2014:** 100 people have been killed for using RTI Act and thousands have been assaulted, threatened—**Transparency international.**
- **Judicial Stays:** stay orders on CIC decisions affecting autonomy.
- **February 2019 apex court judgment highlighting** the need to appoint people from all walks of life but still limited to milieu of bureaucracy.

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PYQs

GS IV 2018: "The Right to Information Act is not all about empowerment alone, it essentially redefines the concept of accountability. Discuss.

ANCIENT HISTORY

PRE-CONTEXT

INDUS SCRIPT

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 10.

News: "Why is deciphering the Indus script important?"

Context: On January 5, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced a \$1-million prize for experts or organisations in the event of their success in deciphering the scripts of the Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC). He made the announcement at the inauguration of an international conference to mark the centenary of the IVC discovery.

About Indus Script :

- **A mystery script** called by scholars. It is not yet deciphered.
- It was written in **Boustrophedon style.**

Harappa:

- **Bronze Age civilisation**, also called IVC or Harappan civilisation.
- It was after Harappa, now in Pakistan, which was first site to be discovered in the area in 1924.
- **John Marshal** was the Directorate General of **Archaeological Survey of India** when Harappa was discovered.
- Excavations were made by **Daya Ram Sahni and Rakhal Das Banerji.**
- Nearly 2000 sites are in the civilisation area, which are spread over 1.5 million sq. km in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.
 - **Northernmost site:** Manda (R.Chenab, Jammu).
 - **Southernmost:** Daimabad (R.Godavari, Maharashtra).
 - **Easternmost:** Alamgirpur (R. Hindon, Uttar Pradesh).
 - **Westernmost:** Sutkagen Dor (Makran coast, Pakistan).

Contemporaries Harappan Civilisation:

- **Egyptian (R.Nile valley) and Mesopotamian (R.Tigris-Euphrates)** civilisation's were contemporary of the Harappa Civilisation.
- **By the time of mature Harappan period (2600BC-1900BC), pyramids in Egypt were under construction.**
- **Harappa had a wider geographical area** than the combined areas of its contemporary civilisations — Egyptian and Mesopotamian.

It was a Technological powerhouse that excelled in the following:

- Town planning, stadia, massive fortification walls.
- Harvesting water, building reservoirs & warehouses.
- Underground drainage systems.
- Building seafaring boats.
- Fabricating bronze and copper artefacts.
- Making beads, exquisite painted pottery, and terracotta products.
- Its craftsmen made seals of steatite and carved them with realistic human and animal motifs & script within a cramped space of 2 cm by 1.5 cm.

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Thank you!