





INDUS WATER TREATY

Why in News?

India has successfully completed the Shahpur Kandi Barrage on the Ravi River, significantly reducing water flow to Pakistan in line with its rights under the Indus Water Treaty (IWT).

Key Highlights

1. Exclusive Rights Over Ravi:

- India has unrestricted rights to use the waters of Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej under the IWT.
- Previously, water from the Ravi flowed wastefully into Pakistan through the Madhopur Headworks.

2. Shahpur Kandi Barrage:

- Located in Pathankot, Punjab, it diverts 1,150 cusecs of water to J&K, Punjab, and Rajasthan, enhancing agriculture and hydropower generation.
- Part of a larger multi-purpose river valley project, it includes two hydel power projects with a combined capacity of 206 MW.

Provisions:

- Includes a Permanent Indus Commission to oversee implementation.
- Dispute Resolution Mechanism:
 - Step 1: Indus Commission for routine issues.
 - Step 2: Neutral Expert for unresolved differences.
 - Step 3: Court of Arbitration (CoA) for disputes beyond expert adjudication.

Challenges and Issues with IWT

1. **Pakistan's Opposition:** Pakistan contests Indian projects (e.g., Kishanganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects) for allegedly violating treaty provisions.
2. **Climate Change Impact:** Altered precipitation patterns affect river flows, challenging fixed water-sharing mechanisms.
3. **Data Sharing Issues:** Limited transparency in flow data exchange, is critical for effective water management.
4. **Dispute Escalation:** India prefers neutral experts, while Pakistan leans on the Permanent Court of Arbitration, leading to conflicting interpretations of the treaty.
5. **Technological Advancements:** Treaty provisions, framed in the 1960s, fail to consider modern water-use technologies.

Significance of Shahpur Kandi Barrage



1. **Enhanced Water Utilization:** Maximizes India's share of Ravi waters, reducing wastage.
2. **Boost to Agriculture and Energy:** Increases water availability for irrigation and clean energy production.
3. **Strategic Importance:** Reinforces India's rights under the IWT, ensuring better management of its share of Indus waters.

Way Forward

1. **Revisiting the IWT:**
 - Incorporate modern water-sharing principles like Equitable and Reasonable Utilization (ERU) and No Harm Rule (NHR).
 - Update treaty provisions to address climate variability and technological advancements.
2. **Strengthening Bilateral Cooperation:** Regular meetings of Indus Commissioners to foster transparency and trust.
3. **Promoting Data Transparency:** Implementing open data policies for shared river flow and usage information.
4. **Adaptive Water Management:** Develop infrastructure to store and efficiently utilize water in light of changing climatic conditions.

Conclusion

The completion of the Shahpur Kandi Barrage highlights India's commitment to harnessing its rightful share of water under the IWT while addressing critical challenges like climate change, water security, and sustainable development. However, revisiting and updating the treaty is essential for ensuring equitable and effective water-sharing in the face of emerging geopolitical and environmental realities.

Do you know?

About Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

Signed in 1960 by India and Pakistan, with the World Bank as guarantor, the IWT ensures equitable distribution of the Indus River system:

- Eastern Rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej): Full control of India.
- Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab): Pakistan retains control, but India may use them for limited purposes like irrigation and hydropower.