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Indus Waters Treaty

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Why is in news? Hope India implements IWT in 'good faith': Pakistan

The Indus Waters Treaty is a **water-sharing treaty** between India and Pakistan, **brokered by the World Bank**, and **signed in 1960**.

It allocates the use of the Indus River and its tributaries, which originate in India and flow through Pakistan, to the two countries.

In 1947, the line of partition, aside from delineating geographical boundaries for India and Pakistan, also cut the Indus river system into two.

Initially, the Inter-dominion accord of May, 1948 was adopted, where both countries, after meeting for a conference, decided that India would supply water to Pakistan in exchange for an annual payment made by the latter.

This agreement however, soon disintegrated as both the countries could not agree upon its common interpretations.

In 1951, in the backdrop of the water-sharing dispute, both the countries applied to the World Bank for funding of their respective irrigation projects on ??Indus and its tributaries, which is when the World Bank offered to mediate the conflict.

Finally in 1960, the World Bank mediated agreement was reached between the two countries and the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) was signed by former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and then President of Pakistan, Ayyub Khan.

The Indus river basin has six rivers – Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej, originating from Tibet and flowing through the Himalayan ranges to enter Pakistan, ending in the south of Karachi.

Under the treaty, **India controls the eastern rivers** (the Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi) and **Pakistan controls the western rivers** (the Indus, Chenab, and Jhelum).

India has the right to **generate hydroelectricity through run-of-the-river (RoR)** projects on the western rivers which, subject to specific criteria for design and operation, is unrestricted.

A permanent **Indus Waters Commission** to **resolve any disputes that may arise** has also been established.

The commission will serve as a forum for exchange of information on the rivers, for continued cooperation and as the first stop for the resolution of conflicts.

The dispute redressal mechanism provided under the IWT is a graded 3-level mechanism.

Under the IWT, whenever India plans to start a project, it has to inform Pakistan. The concerns have to be cleared at the levels of the **Indus Commissioners ? Neutral Expert ? Court of Arbitration**, in a graded manner.

Kamaraj IAS Academy

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040

Phone: **044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477 / Whatsapp : 09710729833**

There has been a **longstanding dispute over two hydroelectric power projects** – one on the **Kishanganga river** (a tributary of Jhelum) and **the other on the Chenab (Ratle)**.

Pakistan has raised objections to these projects, and dispute resolution mechanisms under the Treaty have been invoked multiple times. But a resolution has not been reached.

Criticisms:

Internationally, the Treaty is seen as one of the most successful cases of conflict resolution but between the two countries, it has seeded dissatisfaction and conflicts regarding its interpretation and implementation.

The treaty is highly technical leading to far-ranging divergences between the two countries in terms of interpretations.

For example, the treaty says that storage systems can be built but to a limited extent.

However, the technical details make it difficult to conclude under what circumstances projects can be carried out.

Another concern is the tense political relations between the two countries.

From the Indian point of view:

The basic dissatisfaction is that the treaty prevents it from building any storage systems on the western rivers, even though it allows building storage systems under certain exceptional circumstances.

From Pakistan's point of view:

Due to its suspicions, stays aware of every technical aspect of the project and deliberately tries to get it suspended. The matter is further aggravated by the fact that the western rivers lie in the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir, a subject of a tussle between both since independence.