

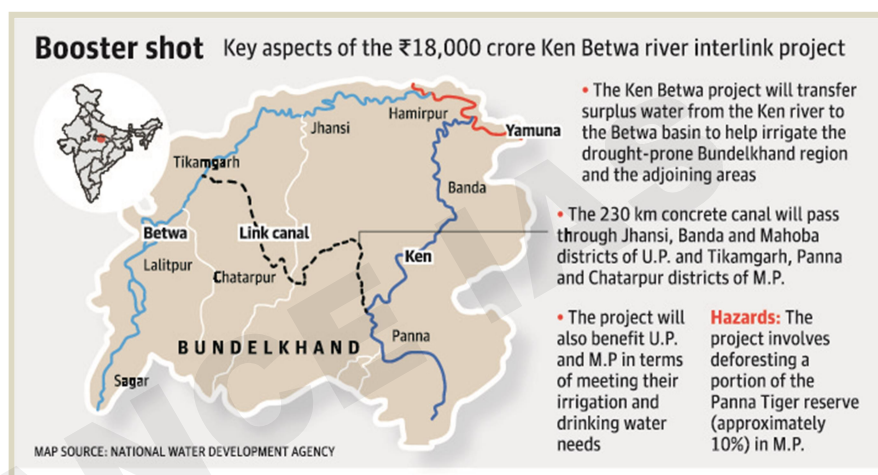
## Ken-Betwa Link Project

**Topic relevance:** GS 2: Integrated Water Resources Management;

**Geo Optional:** Interlinking of rivers.

### Why in news:

- ❖ The Union Cabinet has approved the funding and implementation of the **Ken-Betwa river interlinking project** at a cost of ₹44,605 crore at the 2020-21 price level.
  - ✚ The Centre would fund ₹39,317 crore for the project, with ₹36,290 crore as a grant and ₹3,027 crore as a loan.
- ❖ A **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** called **Ken-Betwa Link Project Authority (KBLPA)** is to be set up for implementation of the project.
- ❖ The project will be completed in **8 years**.



### About the Project:

- ❖ It is the **first project** under the **National Perspective Plan** for interlinking of rivers.
- ❖ The Ken-Betwa Link Project has **two phases**.
  - ✚ Under Phase-I, one of the components — **Daudhan dam** complex and its appurtenances like **Low Level Tunnel**, **High Level Tunnel**, Ken-Betwa link canal and Power houses — will be completed.
  - ✚ While in the Phase-II, three components — **Lower Orr dam**, **Bina complex project** and **Kotha barrage** — will be constructed.
- ❖ The project **lies in Bundelkhand**, a drought-prone region, which spreads across 13 districts of **Uttar Pradesh** and **Madhya Pradesh**.

### How old is the concept of river linking in India?

- ✓ In the past, several river linking projects have been taken up. For instance, the **Periyar Project**, under which transfer of water from **Periyar** basin to Vaigai basin was envisaged, was commissioned in 1895. Other projects such as **Parambikulam Aliyar**, **Kurnool Cudappah Canal**, **Telugu Ganga Project**, and **Ravi-Beas-Sutlej** too were undertaken.

- ✓ In 1980 that the **Ministry of Irrigation** prepared a **National Perspective Plan** for water resources development envisaging inter-basin water transfers. The NPP comprised two components: **Himalayan Rivers Development**; and **Peninsular Rivers Development**. Based on the NPP, the **National Water Development Agency (NWDA)** identified 30 river links– 16 under Peninsular component and 14 under Himalayan Component.
- ✓ Later, the river-linking idea was revived during the **Atal Bihari Vajpayee regime**. The Ken-Betwa Link Project is one of the 16 projects under the peninsular component.

#### **Significance of the project:**

- ❖ The project is expected to boost the **socio-economic prosperity in the backward Bundelkhand region** on account of **increased agricultural activities** and **employment generation**. It would also help in arresting **distress migration** from this region.
- ❖ The river linking project will be a **solution to recurring droughts** in the Bundelkhand region.
- ❖ The project will provide:
  - ✚ an **annual irrigation** of 10.62 lakh Ha,
  - ✚ drinking **water supply** to a population of about 62 lakhs, and
  - ✚ also generate **103 MW of hydropower** and 27 MW solar power.

It will pave the way for more interlinking of river projects to ensure that scarcity of water does not become an inhibitor for development in the country.

#### **Concerns related to the project:**

- **Environmental concern:** the **Daudhan dam**, to be built on the Ken river, will be 77 metres high and its gross capacity will be 2,853 million cubic metres.
  - ✓ The **12,500 hectares of land will submerge** by the project.
  - ✓ The project would harm **Panna tiger reserve**. It will cause irreversible damage to around 40% of the tiger reserve's area.

In order to mitigate adverse impacts on Panna Tiger Reserve, as decided by NTCA, **Landscape Management Plan to decide mitigation strategy with respect to Ken-Betwa Link entrusted to Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun** and is in its final stage.

- ✓ **Disrupting ecosystems** – Approximately 7.2 lakh trees will cut down. This will have an impact on the rainfall of the region.
- **Economic viability:**
  - ✓ In the past few years, the **river did not always flow in a steady stream**.
  - ✓ Another challenge would be that the **Ken River flows 60-70 feet lower than the Betwa River**. It requires at least 30% of the 103 MW produced power to pump the water up.
  - ✓ There is a significant financial expense associated with project implementation and maintenance. It is increasing as a result of project delays.



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## Ken and Betwa Rivers:

- ✚ 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.

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