

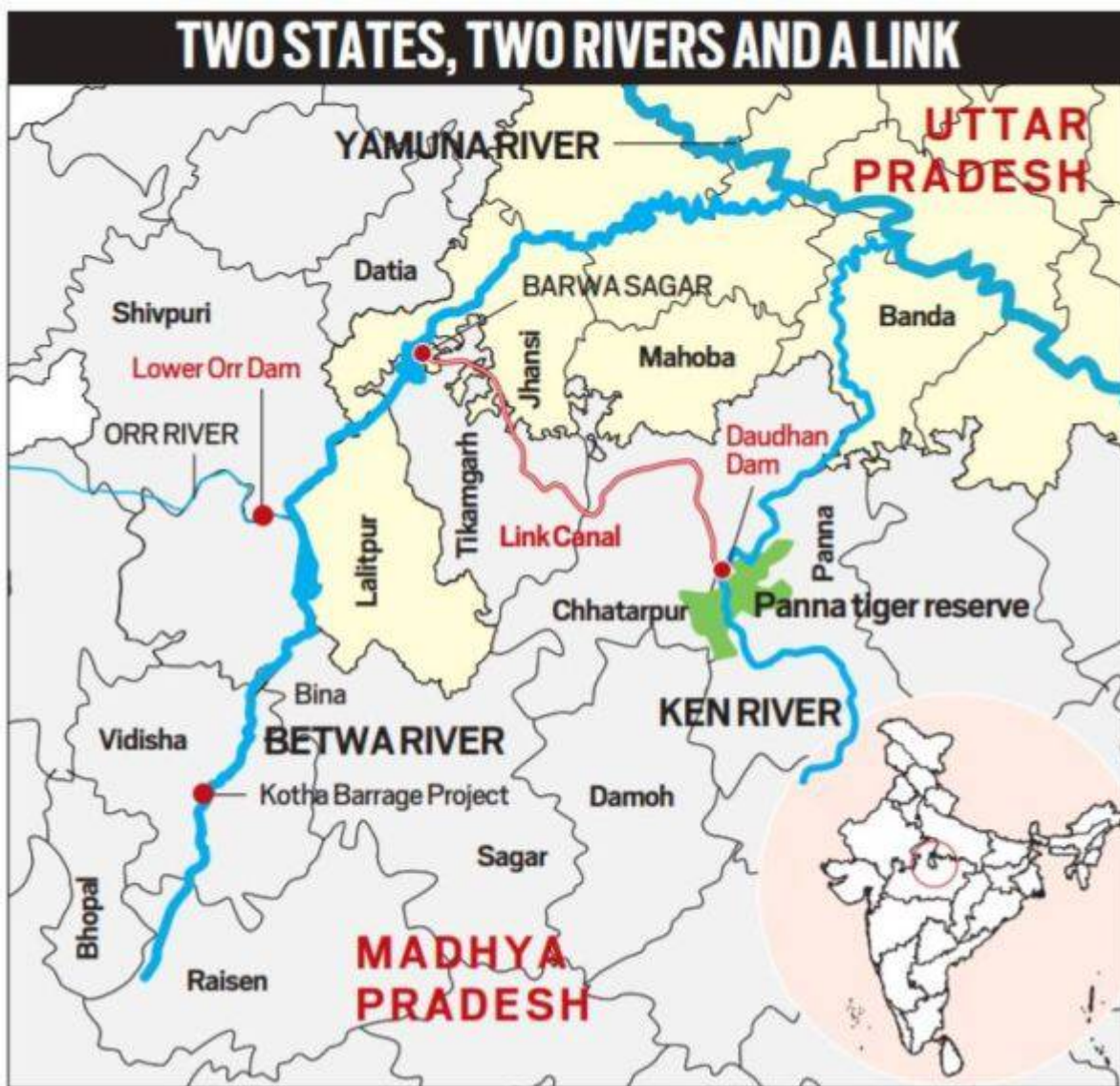
## The Ken-Betwa River Linking Project

### Why in news?

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the funding and implementation of Ken-Betwa inter-linking of rivers project that will be completed in 8 years.

### What is the Ken-Betwa Link Project?

- On March 22, 2021, a memorandum of agreement was signed among the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the governments of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to implement the Ken-Betwa Link Project.
- The project envisages transferring water from the Ken river to the Betwa river, both tributaries of the Yamuna.
- It is the first project under the National Perspective Plan for interlinking of rivers.
- The Ken-Betwa Link Canal will be 221 km long, including a 2-km long tunnel.
- **Phases-** The project has two phases, with four components.
- Phase-I - Involves one of the components — **Daudhan Dam complex** and its subsidiary units such as Low Level Tunnel, High Level Tunnel, Ken-Betwa Link Canal and power houses.
- Phase-II - Involves three components — **Lower Orr Dam, Bina Complex Project and Kotha Barrage.**
- **Special Purpose Vehicle** - An SPV called Ken-Betwa Link Project Authority (KBLPA) will be set up to implement the project.
- **NIRA-** The Centre has set in motion the process of creation of National Interlinking of Rivers Authority (NIRA)
- It will be an independent autonomous body for planning, investigation, financing and implementation of the interlinking of river (ILR) projects in the country.
- The NIRA will have powers to set up SPV for individual link projects.



### What is the need for this project?

- The project lies in **Bundelkhand**, a drought-prone region, which spreads across 13 districts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
- The project is expected to provide
  - Annual irrigation of 10.62 lakh hectares,
  - Supply drinking water to about 62 lakh people
  - Generate 103 MW of hydropower
  - Generate 27 MW of solar power
- The project is expected to boost 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.
- 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.

### What are the concerns regarding this project?

- **Submergence of Panna Tiger Reserve**- According to the National Water Development Agency under the Jal Shakti Ministry, the Daudhan dam, to be built on the Ken river will involve a submergence of 9000 ha area.
- This will partly submerge the Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh and affect the habitat of

vultures and jackal.

- But the project was cleared by the apex wildlife regulator, the National Board for Wildlife, in 2016.
- **Delay in CLMP-** For environment management and safeguards, a Comprehensive Landscape Management Plan (CLMP) has been proposed but it is still under finalisation by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
- **Pending cases-** The environmental clearance was challenged and is pending at the National Green Tribunal (NGT)
- The stage II (final) Forest Clearance and subsequent state approval in this case from the Madhya Pradesh government is also pending.

### What clearances are required for a river linking project?

- Techno-economic clearance - Given by the Central Water Commission
- Forest clearance and environmental clearance - Given by the Ministry of Environment & Forests
- Resettlement and rehabilitation plan of tribal population - Given by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs
- Wildlife clearance - Given by the Central Empowered Committee

### What about the earlier cases of river interlinking?

- The Periyar Project was commissioned in 1895 under which transfer of water from Periyar basin to Vaigai basin was envisaged.
- In the 1970s, the then Union Irrigation Minister Dr K L Rao suggested the construction of a National Water Grid for transferring water from water-rich areas to water-deficit areas.
- Later, Captain Dinshaw J Dastoor proposed a Garland Canal to redistribute the water from one area to another.
- But the government did not pursue these two ideas further.
- In August 1980, the Ministry of Irrigation prepared a **National Perspective Plan for water resources development** envisaging inter-basin water transfer.
- The NPP comprised two components.
  - Himalayan Rivers Development
  - 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.
- Projects such as Parambikulam Aliyar, Kurnool Cudappah Canal, Telugu Ganga Project, and Ravi-Beas-Sutleji were undertaken by the government.

### References

1. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/ken-betwa-river-linking-project-explained-7664323/>
2. [https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/union-cabinet-approves-funding-of-ken-betwa-rivers-interlinking-project-121120801460\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/union-cabinet-approves-funding-of-ken-betwa-rivers-interlinking-project-121120801460_1.html)