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## Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal

### Context:

The Supreme Court drew an assurance from the State of Punjab that it will meet the Haryana counterpart within this month to discuss the construction of the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) Canal which has been languishing for two decades.

### Relevance:

GS-I: Geography (Drainage System in India, Projects to improve Irrigation), GS-II: Polity and Governance (Inter-State Relations)

### Dimensions of the Article:

1. Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal
2. Sharing of river waters
3. Punjab's argument
4. Sutlej / Satluj River
5. Yamuna River

Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal



- On April 8, 1982, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi launched the construction of the SYL Canal with a groundbreaking ceremony in Kapoori village in Patiala district.
- A stretch of 214 km was to be constructed, out of which 122 km was to cross Punjab and 92 km in Haryana. But the Akalis launched an agitation in the form of Kapoori Morcha against the construction of the canal.
- Then in July 1985, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and then Akali Dal chief Sant Harchand Singh Longowal signed an accord agreeing for a new tribunal to assess the water.
- On August 20, 1985, Longowal was killed by militants, less than a month for signing the accord.
- In other violence, labourers were shot dead in Majat village near Chunni and Bharatgarh near Ropar.
- The construction came to a halt. In the backdrop of these incidents, Punjab leaders has been cautioning the Centre not to rake up the issue again.

#### The tribunal

- The **Eradi Tribunal headed by Supreme Court Judge V Balakrishna Eradi** was set up to reassess availability and sharing of water.
- In 1987, the tribunal recommended an increase in the shares of Punjab and Haryana to 5 MAF and 3.83 MAF, respectively.

#### Sharing of river waters

- The canal, once completed, will enable sharing of the waters of the rivers Ravi and Beas between the two states.
- The issue dates back to 1966 at the time of reorganisation of Punjab and formation of



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Haryana was formed.

- Punjab was opposed to sharing the waters of the two rivers with Haryana, citing riparian principles.

### The shares

- A decade before the formation of Haryana, the water flowing down Ravi and Beas was assessed at 15.85 million acre feet (MAF) per year.
- The Union government had organised a meeting in 1955 between the three stakeholders — Rajasthan, undivided Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir — and allotted 8 MAF per year to Rajasthan, 7.20 MAF to undivided Punjab and 0.65 MAF to J&K.
- A decade after reorganisation, the Centre issued a notification allocating 3.5 MAF to Haryana out of the 7.2 MAF allotted to Punjab before reorganisation.
- In a reassessment in 1981, the water flowing down Beas and Ravi was estimated at 17.17 MAF, of which 4.22 MAF was allocated to Punjab, 3.5 MAF to Haryana, and 8.6 MAF to Rajasthan.

### Punjab's argument

- As per a state government study, many areas in Punjab may go dry after 2029.
- The state has already over-exploited its groundwater for irrigation purposes as it fills granaries of the Centre by growing wheat and paddy worth Rs 70,000 crore every year.
- As per reports, water in about 79% of the state's area is over-exploited.
- Out of 138 blocks, 109 blocks are "over-exploited", two blocks are "critical" five blocks are "semi-critical" and only 22 blocks are in "safe" category.
- In such a situation, the government says sharing water with any other state is impossible.
- Haryana has been staking claim to the Ravi-Beas waters through the SYL Canal on the plea that providing water for irrigation was a tough task for the state.
- In southern parts, where underground water had depleted up to 1700 feet, there was a problem of drinking water.
- Haryana has been citing its contribution to the central food pool and arguing that it is being denied its rightful share in the water as assessed by a tribunal.

### Sutlej / Satluj River

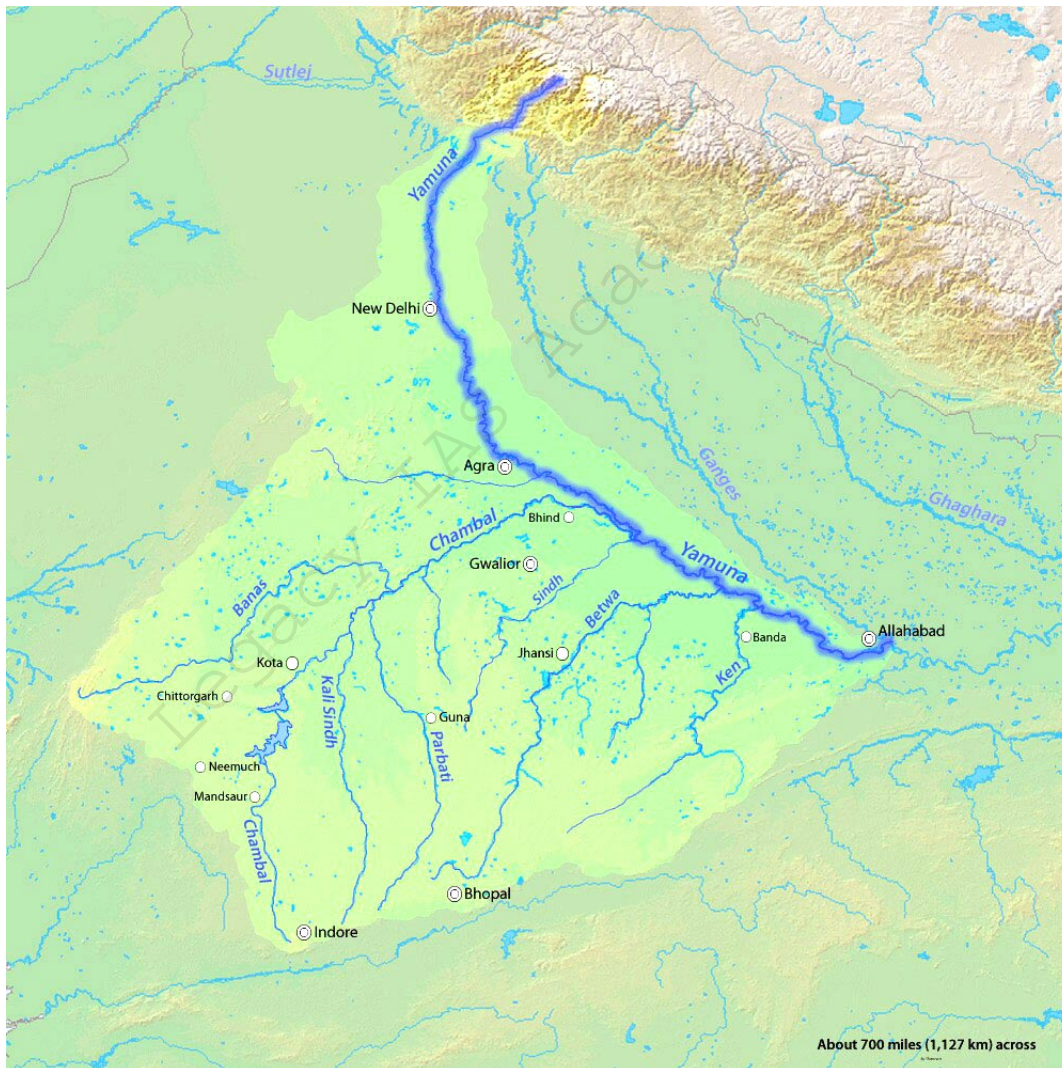
- The Sutlej River is the longest of the five rivers that flow through the historic crossroads region of Punjab in **northern India and Pakistan**.
- It is the easternmost tributary of the Indus River.
- The waters of the Sutlej are allocated to India under the Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan, and are mostly diverted to irrigation canals in India.
- It has several major hydroelectric points, including the 1,325 MW Bhakra Dam, the 1,000



MW Karcham Wangtoo Hydroelectric Plant, and the 1,500 MW Nathpa Jhakri Dam.

- The drainage basin is mainly in India's Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana states.
- The source of the Sutlej is west of the catchment area of Lake Rakshastal in Tibet, as springs in an ephemeral stream.

## Yamuna River



- **The river Yamuna, a significant tributary of the Ganges, flows from the Yamunotri glacier near the Bandarpooch peaks in the Mussoorie range of the lower Himalayas, at an elevation of around 6387 metres above mean sea level in Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district.**
- After flowing through Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, and Delhi, it meets the Ganges at the Sangam (where the Kumbh mela is held) in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh.
- 1376 kilometres in length
- Dams of note include the Lakhwar-Vyasi Dam in Uttarakhand and the Tajewala Barrage Dam in Haryana.
- Chambal, Sindh, Betwa, and Ken are important tributaries.



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*-Source: The Hindu*

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