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Q6(b)

Highlight the main features of the 'Inter-linking of Rivers' project in India. What could be its probable advantages to Indian agriculture?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Rural and Agrarian transformation in India

Rural and Agrarian transformation in India: Programmes of rural development, Community Development Programme, cooperatives, poverty alleviation schemes; Green revolution and social change; Changing modes of production in Indian agriculture; Problems of rural labour, bondage, migration.

Core demand of the question

- Highlight the main features of the 'Inter-linking of Rivers' project in India. What could be its probable advantages to Indian agriculture?

Revision summary

The project would transfer water across Himalayan and peninsular basins.

Features include large storage, canals and central-state bargaining.

Agriculture could gain stable irrigation and some flood moderation.

Benefits will follow existing land power unless designed otherwise.

Ecology, **displacement** and 'surplus' labels are the main risks.

Introduction

The Inter-linking of Rivers project is a mega-engineering vision to move water from surplus to deficit basins through canals and dams. For agriculture it promises irrigation. Sociologically it also promises conflict over whose water and whose land.

Body

Main features

- **A national water grid idea:** **Himalayan and peninsular components**, storage, and transfer links.
- Central steering with state consent problems, because rivers are federal facts and cultures.
- **Large civil works:** reservoirs, canals, and power, in the lineage of planned irrigation after the Five-Year Plans.
- Environmental and **displacement** clearances as bottlenecks, especially in Adivasi and delta tracts.

Probable agrarian advantages

- Stabilised irrigation in drought-prone Deccan and western tracts could thicken a commercial kisan layer, as canals did in older command areas.
- Flood moderation in some donor basins and dry-season water in donee basins could cut crop failure.

- Navigable stretches and hydropower are side claims that may cheapen input movement.

Sociological cautions

- **Advantages follow land:** maliks and rich peasants drink first, as Thorner's map still warns.
- Inter-state and intra-basin politics can turn a 'national' link into a water riot.
- Canal salinity, lost fisheries, and submerged villages can be a bane to agrarian classes who do not own the new command.
- Climate change makes 'surplus basin' a unstable label.

Balanced agrarian view

- Water where the field is thirsty is a real advantage if titles, ecology, and Gram Sabha consent travel with the canal.

Flow diagram

River links dams canals -> Irrigation in deficit basins

River links dams canals -> Displacement inter-state conflict

Land class -> Who drinks first

Conclusion

Inter-linking features a national transfer grid of dams and canals. Probable agricultural advantages are irrigation stability and some flood control. Without class-fair distribution and ecological honesty, the project can reproduce Green Revolution inequality on a larger map.

Facts & figures

Himalayan and peninsular components

The two broad legs of the inter-linking vision.

Command area inequality

Historical pattern that canal water thickens rich peasants first.

Federal rivers

States contest donor-donee labels, a political feature of the project.

Displacement

Reservoirs repeat the Narmada-type social cost of planned water.