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**GS-1**

**River interlinking project**

**Context:**

Union Government has approved Rs 4,900 crore Kosi-Mechi Interlinking project for interlinking of Kosi and Mechi rivers of Bihar. This is the second major river interlinking project in the country to be approved by Central Government after the Ken-Betwa project in Madhya Pradesh.

**About the project**

- The river Kosi is an international river originating from Tibet and flowing through Nepal in Himalayan Mountains and the lower portion through plains of North Bihar.
- To overcome the acute problem of shifting of course of Kosi river, heavy sediment load, flooding etc. and to alleviate the severe suffering of the people of Bihar, the then His Majesty's Government of Nepal and The Government of India signed an agreement on 25th April 1954 for implementation of Kosi project.
- The present proposal is an extension of Eastern Kosi Main Canal (EKMC) system upto river Mechi, a tributary of river Mahananda.

**Benefits**

- The aim of extension of EKMC upto Mechi river is mainly to provide irrigation benefits to the water scarce Mahananda basin command in the districts of Araria, Kishanganj, Purnea and Katihar during kharif season depending upon the pondage available in Hanuman Nagar barrage.
- This intrastate link scheme will thus transfer part of surplus water of Kosi basin to Mahananda basin. In view of irrigation benefit from the link canal, the project is fully justified.

**Water stress: A report**

India has more than three times the population of the other 16 extremely highly stressed countries combined, the WRI noted.

**Details**



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- One-quarter of the world's population faces "extremely high" levels of baseline water stress, which means that irrigated agriculture, industries, and municipalities withdraw more than 80% of their available supply on average every year, new data from the World Resources Institute (WRI) show.
- India is 13th among these 17 countries.
- India has more than three times the population of the other 16 extremely highly stressed countries combined, the WRI noted.
- This implies that more than three-quarters of these populations facing extremely high water stress live in India.
- The WRI noted that last year, NITI Aayog declared that the country is "suffering from the worst water crisis in its history, and millions of lives and livelihoods are under threat".
- In addition to rivers, lakes and streams, India's groundwater resources are severely overdrawn, largely to provide water for irrigation.
- Groundwater tables in some northern aquifers declined at a rate of more than 8 cm per year between 1990 and 2014.

#### **Steps taken**

- The WRI took note of steps India has taken to mitigate water stress, including setting up the Jal Shakti Ministry.
- Other solutions India could pursue, the WRI suggested, include more efficient irrigation; conserving and restoring lakes, floodplains, and groundwater recharge areas; and collecting and storing rainwater.

#### **Global scenario**

- Globally, water withdrawals have more than doubled since the 1960s due to growing demand.
- Apart from the 17 countries facing withdrawals of 80% or more from available supply, 44 countries (home to one-third of the world) face "high" levels of stress, where on average more than 40% of available supply is withdrawn every year.
- Twelve out of the 17 most water-stressed countries are in the Middle East and North Africa.
- The region is hot and dry, so water supply is low to begin with, but growing demands have pushed countries further into extreme stress.



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- The WRI said climate change is set to complicate matters further: The World Bank found that this region has the greatest expected economic losses from climate-related water scarcity, estimated at 6%-14% of GDP by 2050.
- The Aqueduct tool used by the WRI ranks countries on the basis of “water risk scores”, which are determined using 13 indicators of water risk.

#### **GS-2**

#### **Anti-Lynching Bill**

#### **Why in news?**

Rajasthan Assembly Passes Anti-Lynching Bill.

#### **Key features of the bill:**

#### **Definitions:**

- “Mob” – a group of two or more individuals.
- “Lynching” – “an act or series of acts of violence or those of aiding, abetting or attempting an act of violence, whether spontaneous or preplanned, by a mob on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, language, dietary practices, sexual orientation, political affiliation or ethnicity”.

#### **Punishment:**

- For the offence of an assault by mob, leading to the victim suffering grievous hurts, the Bill provides for jail terms up to 10 years and a fine of Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 3 lakh.



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- In cases of the victims suffering simple injuries, the Bill proposes imprisonment up to seven years and a fine up to Rs. 1 lakh.
- For hatching a conspiracy of lynching or aiding, abetting or attempting such an offence, the Bill seeks to punish the offenders in the same manner as if he actually committed the offence of lynching.

**Prevention:**

- The Bill empowers the state police chief to appoint a state coordinator of the rank of inspector general of police to prevent the incidents of lynching in the state with the district superintendents of police acting as the district's coordinator, to be assisted by a deputy superintendents of police, for taking measures to prevent incidents of mob violence and lynching.

**Coverage:**

- The Bill also enlists various other offences related to the lynching such as dissemination of offensive materials, propagation of hostile environment and obstructing legal processes, which would be punishable with jail terms varying from three to five years.

**Compensation and rehabilitation:**

- The Bill also stipulates the provision of compensation to victims by the state government as per the Rajasthan Victim Compensation Scheme.



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- It also binds the state government to take necessary measures to rehabilitate the victims of mob lynching, suffering displacements from their native places.

### **UNSC RESOLUTION-47**

#### **Why in news?**

Hours after news broke of the government's decision to remove the special status for the state of Jammu and Kashmir by modifying Article 370 of India's Constitution, Pakistan's prime minister, Imran Khan slammed the move as "illegal" and said that it would result in further deterioration of diplomatic relations between India & Pakistan.

#### **What are the UN Security Council resolutions that Imran Khan spoke about?**

- In his statement, Imran Khan referred to Resolution 47 of the UNSC that focuses on the complaint of the Government of India concerning the dispute over the State of Jammu and Kashmir, that India took to the Security Council in January 1948.
- In October 1947, following an invasion by soldiers from the Pakistan Army in plainclothes and tribesmen, the Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh sought assistance from India and signed the Instrument of Accession.
- After the first war in Kashmir (1947-1948), India approached the UN Security Council to bring the conflict in Kashmir to the notice of Security Council members.

#### **Who were the UNSC members who oversaw the issue?**

- The UN Security Council increased the size of the investigating council to include six members along with permanent members of the UNSC.



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- Along with the five permanent members, China, France, UK, US & Russia, non-permanent members included Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Syria and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

#### **What happened at the UNSC?**

- India's position was that it was ready to hold a plebiscite, a direct vote in which an entire electorate votes on a specific proposal, to know of the people's desire and accept the results of the vote.
- Pakistan denied its involvement in the conflict and counter-accused India.
- In response the UNSC, under Resolution 39 (1948) stated "with a view to facilitating...the restoration of peace and order and to the holding of a plebiscite, by the two Governments, acting in co-operation with one another and with the Commission, and further instructs the Commission to keep the Council informed of the action taken under the resolution."
- It also ordered for the conflict to cease and to create conditions for a "free and impartial plebiscite" to decide whether Jammu and Kashmir would accede to India or Pakistan.

#### **What did the UNSC order Pakistan to do?**

- The UNSC ordered that Pakistan was to withdraw its tribesmen and Pakistan nationals who had entered "the State for the purpose of fighting" and to prevent future intrusions and to prevent "furnishing of material aid to those fighting in the State".
- The UNSC also stated that it gave "full freedom to all subjects of the State, regardless of creed, caste or party, to express their views" and the freedom to vote on the issue of the accession of the State.
- It was also ordered Pakistan to cooperate with maintaining peace and order.



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**What did the UNSC order India to do?**

- The UNSC had a more comprehensive set of orders for India.
- It said that after the Pakistani army and tribesmen had withdrawn from the State and the fighting had ceased, India was to submit a plan to the Commission for withdrawing forces from Jammu and Kashmir and to reduce them over a period of time to the minimum strength required for civil maintenance of law and order.
- India was ordered to appraise the Commission of the stages at which steps had been taken to reduce military presence to the minimum strength and to arrange remaining troops after consultations with the Commission.
- Among other instructions, India was ordered to agree that till the time the Plebiscite Administration found it necessary to exercise the powers of direction and supervision over the State forces and police, these forces would be held in areas to be agreed upon with the Plebiscite Administrator.
- It also directed India to recruit local personnel for law and order and to safeguard the rights of minorities.

**How did India & Pakistan react to the UNSC Resolution 47?**

- Both countries rejected Resolution 47. India's contention was that the resolution ignored the military invasion by Pakistan and placing both nations on an equal diplomatic ground was a dismissal of Pakistan's aggression and the fact that the Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh had signed the Instrument of Accession.
- India also objected to the Resolution's requirement that did not allow India to retain military presence which it believed it needed for defence.
- India also believed that the powers conferred on the Plebiscite Administrator undermined the state's sovereignty.
- India also wanted Pakistan to be excluded from the operations of the plebiscite.



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- Pakistan on the other hand, objected to even the minimum presence of Indian forces in Kashmir, as allowed by the resolution.
- It also wanted an equal representation in the state government for the Muslim Conference, which was the dominant party in Pakistani-held Kashmir.
- Despite their differences with the provisions of Resolution 47, both India and Pakistan welcomed the UN Commission and agreed to work with it.

### **GS-3**

#### **RBI RATE CUT**

##### **Context:**

- The previous three cuts this year were 25 basis points each. Alongside a cut in the repo rate, the central bank also lowered its GDP growth projection from 7 per cent in June policy to 6.9 per cent now. Express Photo by Pradip Das
- In a bid to augur economic activity amidst slowing consumption demand, the monetary policy committee of Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday unanimously decided to go for its fourth cut this year.
- With a 35 basis point cut (highest this year) the repo rate, at which RBI lends to commercial banks, stood at a 9-year low of 5.4 per cent, since July 2010 when it was 5.25 per cent.
- The previous three cuts this year were 25 basis points each. Alongside a cut in the repo rate, the central bank also lowered its GDP growth projection from 7 per cent in June policy to 6.9 per cent now.

##### **Why the rate cut?**

- While inflation is a key consideration for a rate cut and it provided RBI the comfort to go for a cut, the decision was also taken to boost aggregate demand especially private investment. The





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monetary policy statement said that “inflation is currently projected to remain within the target over a 12-month ahead horizon”.

- The RBI statement further said that domestic economic activity continues to be weak, with the global slowdown and escalating trade tensions posing downside risks.
- It added that while private consumption, the mainstay of aggregate demand, and investment activity remain sluggish, the benign inflation outlook provides headroom for policy action to close the negative output gap.
- “Addressing growth concerns by boosting aggregate demand, especially private investment, assumes the highest priority at this juncture while remaining consistent with the inflation mandate,” said the RBI policy statement.

#### **Why has GDP growth been revised downwards?**

- This is the second consecutive policy statement where the RBI has lowered its GDP growth projection for 2019-20.
- While in June statement it revised its projection downward from 7.2 per cent (stated in April 2019) to 7 per cent.
- This time it further revised the growth projection further down to 6.9 per cent.
- The RBI said that “various high frequency indicators suggest weakening of both domestic and external demand conditions...business expectations Index of the Reserve Bank’s industrial outlook survey shows muted expansion in demand conditions in Q2, although a decline in input costs augurs well for growth”.
- It said that the monetary policy easing since February 2019 is expected to support economic activity, going forward.



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## **NIIF**

### **Why in news?**

AustralianSuper, one of Australia's largest superannuation fund and Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (Ontario Teachers'), one of Canada's largest single-profession pension plans, have each signed agreements with the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) of India for investments of up to \$1 billion each in NIIF's Master Fund.

### **About NIIF:**

- National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) is India's first sovereign wealth fund that was set up by the Government of India in February 2015.
- The objective behind creating this fund was to maximize economic impact mainly through infrastructure investment in commercially viable projects, both Greenfield and Brownfield. [

### **Types of funds**

- NIIF manages three funds: Master Fund, Fund of Funds and Strategic Fund. The funds were set up to make infrastructure investments in India by raising capital from domestic and international institutional investors.

### **Master Fund**

- The Master Fund is an infrastructure fund with the objective of primarily investing in operating assets in the core infrastructure sectors such as roads, ports, airports, power etc.

### **Fund of Funds**

- Fund of Funds anchor and/or invest in funds managed by fund managers who have good track records in infrastructure and associated sectors in India. Some of the sectors of focus include Green Infrastructure, Mid-Income & Affordable Housing, Infrastructure services and allied sectors.



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**Strategic Investment Fund**

- Strategic Investment Fund is registered as an Alternative Investment Fund II under SEBI in India.
- The objective of National Investment and Infrastructure Fund II (“Strategic Fund”) is to invest largely in equity and equity-linked instruments.
- The Strategic Fund will focus on green field and brown field investments in the core infrastructure sectors.