Feni River MoU - India and Bangladesh

Why in news?

- The Union Cabinet has approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Bangladesh.
- The MoU was on the withdrawal of 1.82 cusecs of water from the Feni river by India for a drinking water supply scheme for Sabroom town in Tripura.

What is the dispute over the Feni river?

- The Feni river forms part of the India-Bangladesh border.
- It originates in the South Tripura district.
- The river passes through Sabroom town on the Indian side, and meets the Bay of Bengal after it flows into Bangladesh.
- According to the Indian government, there has been no water-sharing agreement between the countries on the Feni previously.
- The dispute over the sharing of the river water has been long-standing.
- It was taken up between India and Pakistan (before the independence of Bangladesh) in 1958 during a Secretary-level meeting in New Delhi.
- According to the Bangladeshi reports, water has long been drawn from the Feni river through small pumps on the Indian side.

What is the approval for?

- In August 2019, India and Bangladesh held a water secretary-level meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) in Dhaka.
- There, it was agreed to collect data and prepare water-sharing agreements for seven rivers.
- These are Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla, Dudhkumar, and Feni.
- In this regard, an MoU was signed between the two countries during Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina's visit to India.
- The Cabinet approval now on this is ex-post facto, or having retrospective effect.

What is the significance of the MoU?

- The present supply of drinking water to Sabroom town on the southern tip of

Tripura is inadequate.

- The groundwater in this region has high iron content.
- Given this, the MoU terms would benefit Sabroom town.
- Implementation of the water supply scheme would benefit a population of over 7000 there.
- **Other projects on the Feni** - In Tripura, a 150-metre long, 4-lane bridge across the Feni is being built between India and Bangladesh.
- It is expected to be completed by March 2020 at an estimated expenditure of Rs 73 crore.
- Once ready, it would connect Tripura with Chittagong port in Bangladesh, which is only 70 km away from the Indo-Bangla border.
- It would also play an important role in the proposed economic corridor through India, Bangladesh, China and Myanmar.
- Sabroom is expected to transform into the largest transit hub in the Northeast after the bridge is ready.

Source: Indian Express

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