Inter-State Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2017

Why in news?

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The Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2017 was introduced in the Lok Sabha.

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What are the problems in present set-up?

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- With increasing demand for water, inter-state river water disputes are on the rise.
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- The present Inter State River Water Dispute Act, 1956 that provides the legal framework to address such disputes has many drawbacks.
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- Under the present Act, a separate Tribunal has to be established for each dispute.
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- There are eight inter-state water dispute tribunals, including the Ravi and Beas Waters Tribunal and Krishna River Water Dispute Tribunal.
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- Currently there is no time limit for adjudication or publication of reports.
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- Only three of the eight tribunals have actually given awards accepted by the states.
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- Tribunals like those on the Cauvery and Ravi Beas have been in existence for over 26 and 30 years respectively without any award.
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- There is no upper age limit for the chairman or the members.
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What are the proposals of the new bill?

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- The bill proposes a single standing tribunal with multiple benches instead of multiple tribunals that exist at present.
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- The total time period for adjudication of dispute has been fixed at maximum of 4.5 years.
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- The decision of the Tribunal shall be final and binding.
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- There is no requirement of publication in the official gazette
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- As per the proposed bill, the Tribunal shall have one chairperson, one vice-chairperson and not more than six other members.
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- It limits the tenure of the chairperson to five years or till they attain the age of 70, whichever is earlier.
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- The bill also proposes to introduce mechanisms to resolve disputes amicably by negotiations through a Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) before a dispute is referred to the tribunal
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- DRC to be established by the central government consisting of experts.
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- It also provides for a transparent data collection system at the national level for each river basin.
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- It also calls for the appointment of assessors to provide technical support to the tribunal.
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- An agency to maintain data-bank and information system is to be authorized by central government.
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Source: Livemint

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