

Mahanadi River Water Dispute

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance

Why in News?

Recently, the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal (MWDT) has given Odisha and Chhattisgarh a final opportunity to reach an amicable settlement.

- **River Mahanadi** - It is the *third largest east-flowing* peninsular river of India after Godavari and Krishna.
- **Origin** - Sihawa hills, Dhamtari district, Chhattisgarh.
- **Course** - Flows through Chhattisgarh and Odisha, drains into the Bay of Bengal.
- **Length** - Its total course spans approximately 851 km to 900 km.
- **Catchment Area** - 1,41,600 sq km.
 - Chhattisgarh - 53.9%
 - Odisha - 45.73%
 - Small portions - Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand.
- **Major Tributaries** - Seonath, Hasdeo, Mand, Ib, Ong, Jonk, Tel.
 - *Seonath is the longest tributary.*
- **Key Dam** - Hirakud Dam (Odisha), one of the longest earthen dams in the world.

About the Dispute

- It is a long-standing conflict (since 2016) between Odisha and Chhattisgarh over the sharing of the Mahanadi river's water.
- **Odisha's Stand** - Chhattisgarh's unilateral construction of at least **eight barrages** reduced downstream flow, impacting agriculture, fisheries, and power generation.
 - Odisha calls the Mahanadi its "lifeline" for agriculture, fisheries, and power.
- **Chhattisgarh's Stand** - As an upper riparian state with a larger catchment, it claims the right to utilise water; it also alleges Odisha initiated projects without consultation.

*Upper Riparian State - The state where the river originates or flows first &
Lower Riparian State - The state downstream, receiving the river's flow after passing through the upper state.*

- **1983 Agreement** - Between Odisha and undivided Madhya Pradesh; Chhattisgarh cites it for joint supervision.
- **Joint Control Board (JCB)** - Proposed by Chhattisgarh, but Odisha preferred the tribunal route.

- **Tribunal Formation** - The Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal (MWDT) was constituted in 2018 following the Supreme Court directives.
- **Current Status** - Tribunal extended till April 2026; warned states to finalise settlement formula.
- **Legal Framework**
- **Article 262** - Provides for adjudication of *inter-state river disputes* & empowers Parliament to set up tribunals under the 1956 Act.
- **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956** - Separate tribunals for each dispute, causing delays.
- **In 2019 Amendment** - Single standalone tribunal with multiple benches, strict timelines for awards, aimed at faster resolution.
- **Supreme Court (2016)** - Odisha filed suit under **Article 131** seeking an injunction against Chhattisgarh.
 - **Article 131** - Defines the Supreme Court's exclusive original jurisdiction over legal disputes between the Government of India and one or more States, or between States inter se.

Reference

[The Indian Express | Odisha-Chhattisgarh Mahanadi River Dispute](#)

