Sardar Sarovar (Narmada) Project

What is the issue?

- Over the last two weeks, Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Gujarat (GJ) have engaged in war of words over the sharing of Narmada river waters.
- Now, MP has refused to share its surplus water with Gujarat as it is not sharing the hydro power it is generating, with MP.

What is the story behind?

- In April 2019, Gujarat had requested the Narmada Control Authority for permission, not to start generation at a power house until the dam fills to its full level and this was granted.
- Now, MP has threatened to restrict the flow of water into the Sardar Sarovar Dam, Gujarat.

What is the power equation?

- The Sardar Sarovar Project includes,
    1. River Bed Power House - RBPH (1,200 MW),
    2. Canal Head Power House (250 MW).
- Power is shared among Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat in a 57:27:16 ratio.
- The RBPH has been shut since 2017, when the gates were closed and the reservoir height was raised to 138.63 m.
- Gujarat has sought that generation should not start until the water reaches the full reservoir level (FRL).

What is the protocol?

- The protocol is that once the dam crosses 131 m, some water should be released as it fills to its FRL.
- For this, the power generation in the RBPH should be resumed, where the turbines release the water downstream into the river.
- If the inflow exceeds the capacity of the water released by the turbines after power generation, the gates should be opened.
- The dam cannot just be filled to 138.63 m without balancing the outflow.
- Recently, the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd (SSNNL) announced an upcoming 6-cusec release, in keeping with the 131m protocol. The current

level is 129.65 m.

What Gujarat wants?

- Gujarat has been facing a rain deficit in 2017 and 2018, when the reservoir reached levels of 130.75 m and 129 m.
- But, the SSNNL was granted with its request of not to start production until the water reaches 138.63 m, by the Narmada Control Authority.
- Engineers in Gujarat say reaching the FRL is necessary for testing whether the concrete can withstand the thrust at that level.
- The construction has lasted close to 5 decades with gaps of several years.
- Filling the reservoir is possible only when the RBPH is closed because the water used for generating hydro power cannot be reused.
- The Garudeshwar Weir is still being constructed to store water released after power generation at the RBPH.
- Once the weir is ready, the water can be stored and pumped back using reversible turbines during non-peak hours of the grid.

Why MP objects?

- While MP Chief Minister has indicated that the state will follow the Authority guidelines in letter and spirit, the government has raised an objection to its consent to Gujarat, terming it 'unilateral'.
- The government has refused to share its surplus water with Gujarat that would allow the reservoir to be filled.
- The government's official position was, instead of generating power and sharing it with MP, Gujarat was storing the water released from MP.
- The MP government has cited incomplete rules and regulations, arguing that if the reservoir level increases, those yet to be resettled will be affected.

What is Gujarat's counter?

- Gujarat Chief Minister has blamed the MP government for playing politics over Narmada water.
- Officials say that Gujarat's share of water at 9 MAF in a normal monsoon year is insufficient to generate power as drinking water and irrigation are priorities. (MAF – Million Acre Feet).
- They allege that while MP has the highest share of the water at 18 MAF, it refuses to release the surplus share for power generation and to allow the dam to be tested at FRL out of a "political design".

Source: The Indian Express

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