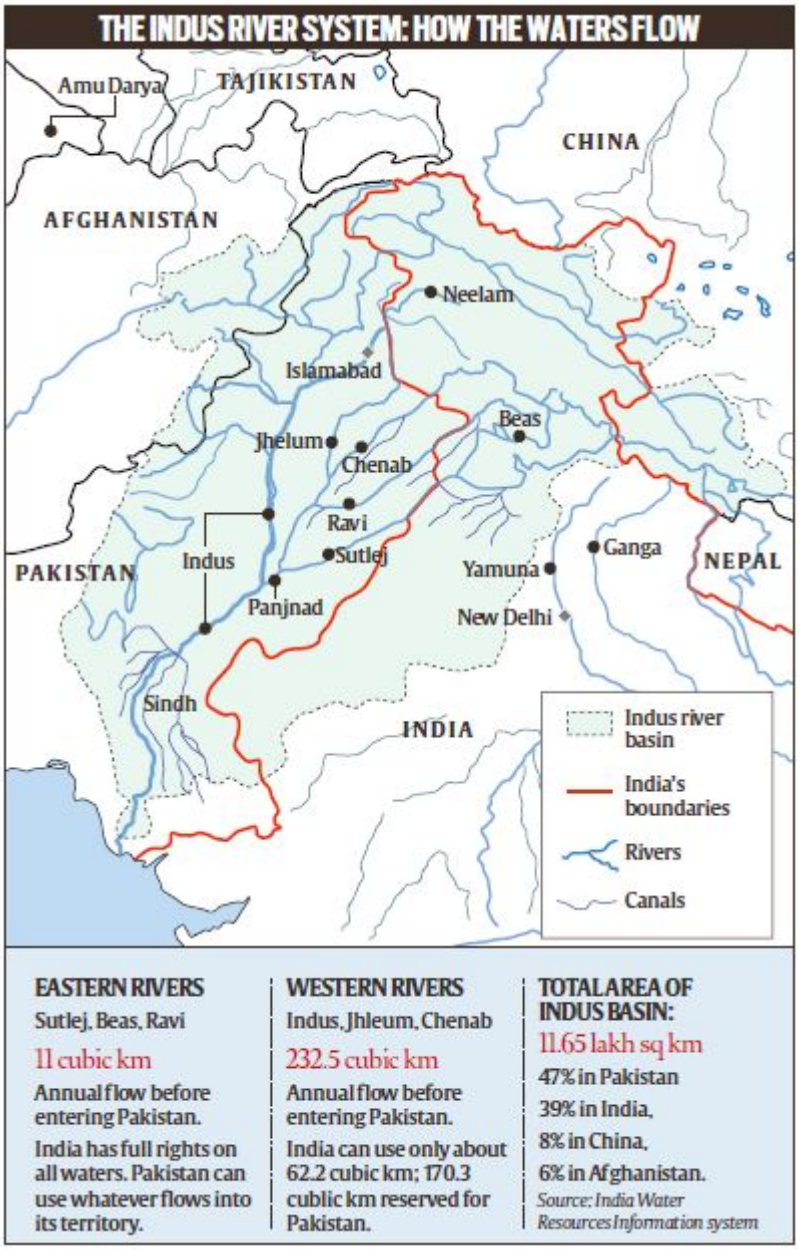
Shift in India's Indus Waters Policy

What is the issue?

- Following the terror attack in Pulwama, the government has decided to stop India’s share of waters in the Indus river system from flowing into Pakistan.
- The decision seems to indicate a new policy direction from the government in terms of the Indus Water Treaty. Click here to know more on the treaty.

What does the Indus treaty provide for?

- The Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 governs Indus water sharing between India and Pakistan.
- The Treaty gives India full control over the waters of the three Eastern rivers - Beas, Ravi and Sutlej.
- The waters of the Western rivers - Indus, Jhelum and Chenab - flow “unrestricted” to Pakistan.
- India is allowed to make use of 20% of the waters of the Western rivers too under the provisions spelt out in the Treaty.
- This includes use of water for purposes of navigation, power production and irrigation.
- The two countries have permanent Indus Water Commissions that meet regularly, to share information and data, and resolve disputes.



How has water sharing been?

- **India** - Historically, India has not been utilising its full claims, neither on the Eastern nor on the Western rivers.
- On the Western rivers specifically, there has been no strong demand for creation of new infrastructure, either for hydroelectricity or irrigation.
- This is because the demand for irrigation has gone down over the years as many farmers in J&K moved to horticulture, from traditional crops.
- So, in effect, India has been letting much more water flow to Pakistan than has been committed under the Treaty.
- **Pakistan** - With India's under-utilisation of its share, Pakistan has benefited more than it is entitled to under the Treaty.
- More than 95% of Pakistan's irrigation infrastructure is in the Indus basin - about 15 million hectares of land.
- It has now become the world's largest contiguous irrigation system,

comprising over 60,000 km of canals.
- Three of Pakistan's biggest dams, including Mangla, which is one of the largest in the world, are built on the Jhelum river.
- These dams produce a substantial proportion of Pakistan's electricity.

What was India's policy shift in 2016?

- After the devastating floods of 2014, the need for storage infrastructure as a flood-control measure was increasingly felt.
- But more seriously, a policy shift had happened in 2016, following the terrorist attack on Army camp in Uri.
- India had temporarily suspended regular meetings of the Indus Commissioners of the two countries after the attack.
- India decided to change the status quo and use more waters of the Indus rivers, which was also a measure to hurt Pakistan's interests.
- India took up the task of revival of several projects that were either suspended or had remained on paper for several years.
- Many of these projects were in Jammu and Kashmir; others were in Punjab and Himachal Pradesh.
- Some of these projects were put on fast-track mode, declared national projects, and money was sanctioned to resume works.
- The notable ones are:

i. 800MW Bursar hydroelectric project on the Marusudar river, one of the tributaries of the Chenab, in Kishtwar, J&K
ii. Shahpur-Kandi project in Gurdaspur, Punjab
iii. 1,856-MW Sawalkot project on the Chenab in Jammu and Kashmir
iv. Ujh project in Jammu and Kashmir

- Bursar will be India's first project on the Western rivers to have storage infrastructure.
- In all, more than 30 projects are under various stages of implementation on the Western rivers, having got the final approvals.
- Besides these, other measures included -

i. finalisation of a revised detailed project report
ii. granting of prompt environmental clearance
iii. disbursal for attractive rehabilitation packages for affected families

What are Pakistan's claims?

- Even before India's policy shift in 2016, Pakistan had been complaining of being denied its due share of waters.
- It has maintained that India had violated the provisions of the Treaty,

especially in reference to many of the projects on the Indus rivers.

- It feels that the Treaty had failed to protect Pakistan's interests and India had managed to manipulate the provisions in its favour.
- Resultantly, increasing number of objections was raised by Pakistan on the projects that are coming up in India.
- These include the Ratle project, the Pakal Dul dam, and Sawalkot, among others.
- But India observes that the main objective was to delay these projects, thereby forcing a cost escalation and making them economically unviable.

What is India's recent decision?

- India has decided to exert much greater control over the waters of the Indus basin.
- However, it will continue to adhere to the provisions of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty.
- A high-level task force was set up under the guidance of the Principal Secretary to the PM.
- This will ensure that India makes full use of the waters it is entitled to under the Treaty.

Source: Indian Express

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