Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP)

Prelims: *Current events of National and International Importance| Environment*

Why in News?

Tensions are rising in Arunachal Pradesh's Siang belt, with sections of the indigenous Adi community, youth leaders and riverbank residents objecting to the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP)

- **The Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP)** – It is a proposed 11,000–11,200 MW mega hydropower and water-storage dam on the Siang River (the headstream of the Brahmaputra) in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Siang district, planned to be built by the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC).
- **Location–** Planned near Geku village in Upper Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Scale–** Estimated 11,000–11,200 MW capacity, a 280–300 meter dam height, and roughly 9–9.2 billion cubic meters of live storage.
- **Status–** Declared a National Project in 2008 and revived strategically in recent years, with pre-feasibility surveys and drilling triggering fresh pushback.

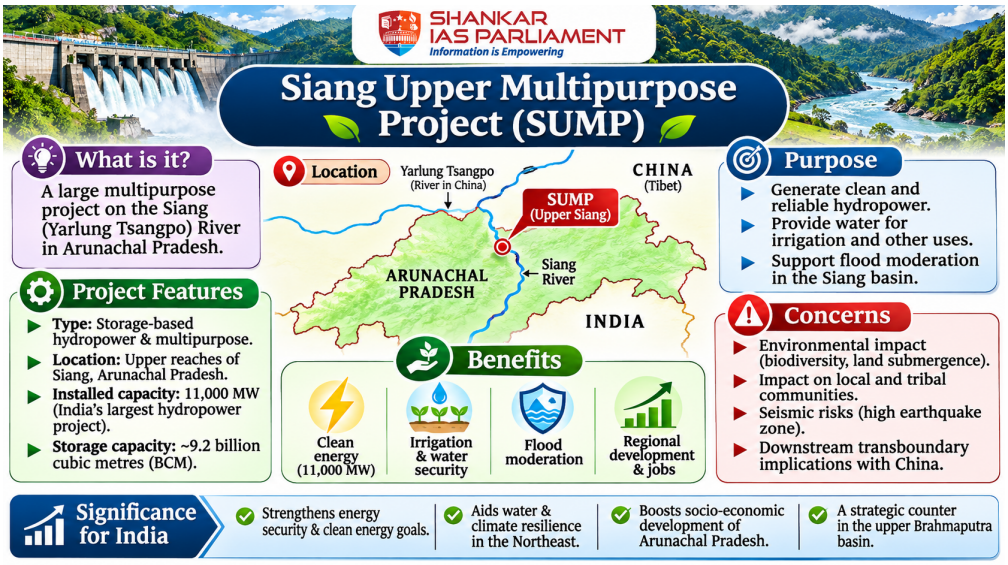
Why the Government Backs It

- **Hydropower & Water Storage–** Generates large-scale renewable electricity and provides storage to manage seasonal river flows and moderate downstream floods.
- **Strategic Counterweight–** Officials view it as a strategic water-security and border-infrastructure measure in response to upstream dam plans by China on the Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet.

Why Communities Resist ("Land, History, and Livelihoods")

- **Displacement & Submergence –** Opponents and community estimates indicate around 27 villages could face submergence (with dozens more indirectly affected), threatening farmland, grazing land, and settlements for the indigenous Adi community.
- **Cultural & Ancestral Loss –** Villagers revere the river as *Ane Siang* (Mother Siang) tied to their identity and history, arguing financial compensation cannot replace ancestral lands, sacred sites, and traditional ways of life.
- **Ecological & Seismic Risks–** Critics highlight fragile Eastern Himalayan biodiversity, forest loss, sediment disruption, and high earthquake risk (Seismic Zone V).
- **Recent Escalation (October–November 2026) –** Tensions spiked in October 2026 as survey and drilling work moved forward.

- Residents blocked roads and halted NHPC personnel; following arrests, clashes, and a multi-district bandh, violence erupted in Pasighat on October 23, prompting prohibitory orders, extra security deployments, and ongoing demands from community leaders and tribal bodies to withdraw forces, release protesters, and consult locals.



Reference

[The Indian Express| Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP)]