Water Crisis: A lead for urban-rural dispute

Why in news?

Increasing trans-boundary transfer of water may result in increasing rural-urban dispute in the near future.

What is the status of water stress in India?

- In the 75 years since independence, the annual per capita availability of water has declined by 75%.
- Global Drought Risk and Water Stress map (2019) highlights that the major parts of India, particularly west and central parts of peninsular India are highly water stressed.
- Composite Water Management Index (2018) released by the NITI Aayog highlights the worst water crisis in the country, with more than 600 million people facing acute water shortages.

> *"SDG 6: To ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all"*

How India handles the water crisis?

- The typical response to handle these water crises includes transfer of water from the hinterlands/upper catchments or drawing it from stored surface water bodies or aquifers.
- This triggers sectoral and regional competition.

> *"At least 12% of large cities in the world rely on inter-basin transfers"*

How water crisis will lead to urban-rural dispute?

- According to Census 2011, the urban population in India accounted for 34% of total population distributed in 7,935 towns of all classes.
- World Urbanization Prospects (2018) estimated that the urban population in India will cross the 40% mark by 2030 and 50% mark by 2050.
- Water use in the urban sector has increased as more and more people shift to urban area.
- The per capita use of water in the urban centres is on the rise, which will continue to grow with improved standards of living.
- The growth of the cities necessitates water supply from hinterlands.
- Thus, the allocation of urban water is enhanced at the expense of rural areas and the

agriculture sector.

- Almost all cities in India that depend on surface water, experiences this trend and it has the potential to ignite the rural-urban dispute.
- This will further be exacerbated by the Climate change.
- Also, in cities, most of this water is in the form of grey water with little recovery or reuse, eventually contributing to water pollution.

How to overcome this challenge?

- A system perspective and catchment scale-based approach are necessary to link reallocation of water with wider discussions on rural-urban partnership.
- Institutional strengthening will provide opportunities to build flexibility into water resource allocation at a regional level, enabling adjustments in rapidly urbanising regions.

Reference

1. https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/indias-growing-water-crisis-the-seen-and-the-unseen/article65891233.ece

