Water Governance in India

Why in News?

India aspires to become the 2nd largest economy by 2047 which will have an enormous impact on the use of water resources and thus highlights the need for effective water governance.

What is water governance?

- **Water governance** – The OECD define water governance as the set of rules, practices, and processes through which *decisions for the management of water resources and services are taken* and implemented, and decision-makers are held accountable.
- **Actors involved** – Central and local governments, regulators, NGOs, communities, and the private sector.

- **Need for water governance** – ***India is a water stressed*** country due to erratic rainfall and excess removal of groundwater
- The data (1990-2021) show that about 30% of the districts received less than normal South-west monsoon rainfall in 20 out of 32 years.
- Out of 766 districts*, 256 districts are water stressed*.
- By 2050, India is likely to experience water scarcity.
- There are *bureaucratic hurdles like* ***Easement Act 1882***, is still followed which gives unlimited power of groundwater withdrawal to the owner of land.
- There is a l*ack of equity in water access*.

At 1.4 billion, India accounts 17.5% of the world's population but has only 4% of the fresh water resources. The per capita annual fresh water availability has gone down from 5177 cu m (1951) to 1486 cu m (2019).

What is the significance of water governance?

- It *ensures the sustainable and efficient use* of water resources, address water-related challenges.
- It *promotes equitable access* to water services.
- It is also essential *to address water-related challenges*, such as water scarcity, water quality degradation, and climate change.

Top performers of G20 in Water Management

• **Water use efficiency** – Turkey, UK, Saudi Arabia and *India*.
• **River rejuvenation** – Australia, China, France, *India*, South Africa.
• **Climate resilient infrastructure** – UK and US.
• **Safe drinking water** – Germany, *India*, Mexico.
• **Water supply augmentation** – Saudi Arabia.
• **Efficient water governance** – Japan, Saudi Arabia.
• **Waste water management** – *India* and Saudi Arabia.
• **Watershed management** – Australia and Saudi Arabia.
• **Groundwater management** – China and Slovakia.

What are challenges in water governance?

- **Fragmented policies** – Owing to different jurisdiction and control of States, the interconnectedness of surface and groundwater systems resulted in fragmented policies.
- **Data gaps** – Data is scattered across multiple agencies, and inadequate for sound decision-making.
- **Looming Water Crisis** – A NITI Aayog report held that 21 major cities are expected to run out of groundwater as soon as 2020 which may affect nearly 100 million people.
- **Absence of River Boards** – While the River Boards Act was passed in 1956, no river board was ever created till this date.
- **Federal issue** – In India, ***water is a State subject*** except inter-State regulation of rivers which is under Central purview

Water – 7th Schedule of Indian Constitution		
	Union List	**State List**
Shipping and Navigation	On inland, tidal and national waterways	On inland waterways
Carriage of goods & passengers	By sea or in national waterways	By inland waterways
Fishing & fisheries	Beyond territorial waters	Within state boundary
Regulation on	Training and education of mercantile marines by states and other agencies and develop interstate rivers and river valleys	Taxes on goods and passengers carried by road/ inland waterways

What is the agenda for action?

- To work for cooperative federalism in water governance.
- To revamp existing *National Water Resource Council*.
- To introduce an overarching institution for regulating the entire water sector at the State level.
    - At present, ***only 5 states have water regulators*** in India.
- To develop a model water regulatory framework for adoption by various States.
- To restructure the CWC (Central Water Commission) and CGWB (Central Ground Water Board).
- To adopt multidisciplinary expertise, bridging silos in water sector, and building multi-stakeholder partnership.

References

1. The Hindu Business Line| Need of Water Governance Reforms
2. The Indian Express| Water governance challenges in India

