

Mettur-Sarabanga Irrigation Project

Lift

April 16, 2021

In News: Recently, The southern bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has dismissed the petition challenging the Tamil Nadu government's ambitious Mettur-Sarabanga lift irrigation project.

What is the Issue?

- According to the applicant, the project requires prior environmental clearance and the government was proceeding with the project without obtaining the mandatory clearance under the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006.

NGT Stand

- The applicant is not entitled to get the relief of injunction, restraining the respondents 2 to 4 (Tamil Nadu government) from proceeding with Mettur – Sarabanga Lift Irrigation Project without obtaining prior environmental clearance, as this Tribunal has found that since the irrigation command area is less than 2,000 hectares as per amended Notification of 2018, no prior environmental clearance is required.

Union Environment Ministry Stand

- The Ministry said EIA Notification, 2006 was amended in 2018 according to which Mettur-Sarabanga project falls in the category of minor irrigation system with cultivable command area less than 2,000 hectares and such projects were exempted from the requirement of environmental clearance.

About Mettur-Sarabanga Lift Irrigation Project

- Rs 565 crore project to divert surplus floodwater from Mettur Dam to the Sarabanga River in Salem, through lift irrigation technique.
- Over 100 tanks in Edappadi, Sankari, Mettu, and Omalur will benefit from the move, says the government.
- The project was announced on the floor of the Assembly on July 15 last year.
- The scheme will provide water to 33 tanks in Edappadi and 67 tanks in M Kalipatti tank group, covering a total ayacut of 4,238 acres.
- The water pumped in the main pumping station located in Thippampatti village hamlet of Gonur village will be taken to two tank groups by two outlets – Mecheri Tank Group which starts from Kalipatti Tank and Nangavalli Tank Group which starts from Nangavalli Tank.

Sarabanga River

- Sarabanga is a river flowing in the Salem district of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu.
- The origin of the river is traditionally placed at Yercaud foothills in Tamil Nadu. The river fulfils demands for agricultural irrigation in Danishpet village.
- The river flows through Danishpet, Omalur, Thoppur, Tharamangalam, Dharapuram, Idappadi, Chettipatti, Perichipalayam, Thevur and joins the Kaveri River near Annamar Kovil before flowing into the Bay of Bengal.
- Dams on the river are located at Perichipalayam.

National Green Tribunal

- Established in 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act
- Specialized environmental court that deals with cases relating to environmental protection and the conservation of forests
- It has judicial powers that allow it to exclusively

decide civil environmental matters.

- Guided by principles of natural justice and is not bound by the mainstream code of civil procedure.

Importance of NGT

- India is one of only a few countries to have a specialized environmental court system.
- The advantage of NGT permits direct access to environmental justice
- NGT allows for more relevant and greater expertise, sets up alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and offers a path for the evolution of environmental jurisprudence.
- To achieve the objective of Article 21, 47 and 51A (g) of the Constitution of India by means of fair, fast and satisfactory judicial procedure.