

Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL) canal

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In news- Recently, the Haryana Legislative assembly has passed a resolution seeking completion of the Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL) Canal, bringing back into focus the contentious issue of sharing of river waters between Haryana and Punjab.

History of SYL Canal-

- The Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL) Canal running about 121 km in Punjab and 90 km in Haryana envisages conveying 3.45 Million Acre-Feet (MAF) out of 3.5 MAF of Haryana's average annual share of surplus Ravi-Beas waters (as per 1981 agreement).
- The Haryana portion of the canal is complete and the Punjab portion of the canal was targeted for completion by March 1991.
- **The issue dates back to 1966** at the time of reorganization of Punjab and formation of Haryana.
- **Punjab was opposed to sharing the waters** of the two rivers with Haryana, citing riparian principles.
- A decade before the formation of Haryana, the water flowing down Ravi and Beas was assessed at 15.85 MAF per year.
- **The Union government** had organized a meeting in 1955 between the three stake-holders – Rajasthan, undivided Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir – and **allotted 8 MAF per year to Rajasthan, 7.20 MAF to undivided Punjab and 0.65 MAF to J&K.**
- A decade after reorganization, the Centre issued a notification allocating 3.5 MAF to Haryana out of the 7.2 MAF allotted to Punjab before reorganization.
- **In a reassessment in 1981**, the water flowing down Beas and Ravi was estimated at 17.17 MAF, of which **4.22 MAF**

was allocated to Punjab, 3.5 MAF to Haryana, and 8.6 MAF to Rajasthan.

- In 1982, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi launched the construction of the SYL Canal , however it was stopped due to protest by Akhalidal and the government agreed for a new tribunal.
- **The Eradi Tribunal headed by Supreme Court Judge V Balakrishna Eradi was set up** to reassess availability and sharing of water.
- **In 1987, the tribunal recommended an increase in the shares of Punjab and Haryana to 5 MAF and 3.83 MAF, respectively.** This move also led to militancy and killing of parties involved in signing the accord.
- The construction came to a halt and in the backdrop of these incidents, Punjab leaders have been cautioning the Centre not to rake up the issue again.



Arguments of Punjab & Haryana-

- **As per a state government study, many areas in Punjab may go dry after 2029.**
- **The state has already over-exploited its groundwater for irrigation purposes** as it fills granaries of the Centre by growing wheat and paddy worth Rs 70,000 crore every year.
- As per reports, **water in about 79% of the state's area is over-exploited.**
- In such a situation, the government says sharing water

with any other state is impossible.

- Haryana has been staking claim to the Ravi-Beas waters through the SYL Canal on the plea that providing water for irrigation was a tough task for the state.
- In southern parts, where underground water had depleted up to 1700 feet, there was a problem of drinking water.
- Haryana has been citing its contribution to the central food pool and arguing that it is being denied its rightful share in the water as assessed by a tribunal.