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### 1. Why protesting farmers demand implementation of the Land Acquisition Act 2013

#### Introduction



Punjab farmers have been camping at the Khanauri and Shambhu borders of Punjab and Haryana since February, demanding legal status for the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of crops along with a dozen other demands from the central government. One of the prominent demands is the implementation of the Land Acquisition Act, 2013.

#### What is the Land Acquisition Act, 2013?

The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement Act, 2013 (commonly referred to as the Land Acquisition Act, 2013) was enacted by the Centre to replace the outdated Land Acquisition Act of 1894.

The 2013 Act provides a modern framework for land acquisition, ensuring fair compensation and rehabilitation for affected families. The Act came into force on January 1, 2014. Some amendments were made in 2015.

#### What are the key features of this Act?

Fair compensation and consent requirements are the foremost features of the Act. Landowners are entitled to compensation that is twice the market value in urban areas and four times the market value in rural areas. Additionally, consent is required from 70% of the affected families for Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects, and 80% consent is needed for land acquisition by private companies.

For irrigated multi-cropped land, acquisition is restricted beyond limits specified by the state governments. If such fertile land is acquired, the government must develop an equal size of wasteland for agricultural purposes. If an individual is dissatisfied with an award under the Act, they can approach the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement (LARR) Authority for redressal.

The Act also mandates a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) to evaluate the social, environmental, and economic impacts of land acquisition. Furthermore, the Act includes provisions for Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R), offering entitlements for affected families such as:

- A house for displaced families.
- Financial assistance for livelihood loss.
- Employment or annuity-based income for dependent families.
- Infrastructure development, such as roads, schools, and healthcare facilities, in resettlement areas.

### **What are the other features of this Act?**

The Act narrows the definition of “public purpose” to prevent arbitrary acquisitions. Public purposes include infrastructure projects, urbanisation, and industrial corridors. If the acquired land is not utilised for its stated purpose within five years, it must be returned to the original owners or a land bank.

Certain projects, such as those related to defence, railways, and atomic energy, are exempt from the Act; however, compensation and R&R provisions still apply. Transparency is ensured through public hearings and access to SIA reports. Additionally, the Act mandates extra benefits and consultation processes for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

### **When the Act is already in force, why are farmers demanding its implementation?**

The Act is not being implemented in its letter and spirit, the farmers claim.

“Both the central and state governments are responsible for not implementing the Act in its original form,” said Bharti Kisan Union General Secretary Jagmohan Singh.

He cited the ongoing situation in Noida, where around 160 farmers were recently arrested for protesting against the lack of “fair” compensation for land acquired by the state, for projects including the Yamuna Expressway.

Jagmohan also highlighted that several states have implemented the Act with amendments, leading to controversies and court cases. “Changes were proposed, such as relaxing certain provisions, including the removal of the consent clause for several categories, including PPP initiatives,” he said.

“The Land Acquisition Act, 2013 is a progressive law that ensures fair compensation, providing financial security to farmers. Its consent clause gives farmers a say in whether their land can be acquired, empowering them against forced acquisitions. The Act’s rehabilitation provisions support displaced families by providing livelihood assistance and essential infrastructure in resettlement areas. It also prevents misuse of arbitrary acquisitions for private gains, safeguarding farmers’ dignity, especially as land remains their primary source of income and identity,” Jagmohan said.

### **What challenges does the Act face in its implementation?**

Experts point out that the procedural requirements often delay land acquisition for development projects, and the compensation costs can strain public and private project budgets.

Balancing development needs with social justice remains a contentious issue, making the Act's full implementation challenging, experts say.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

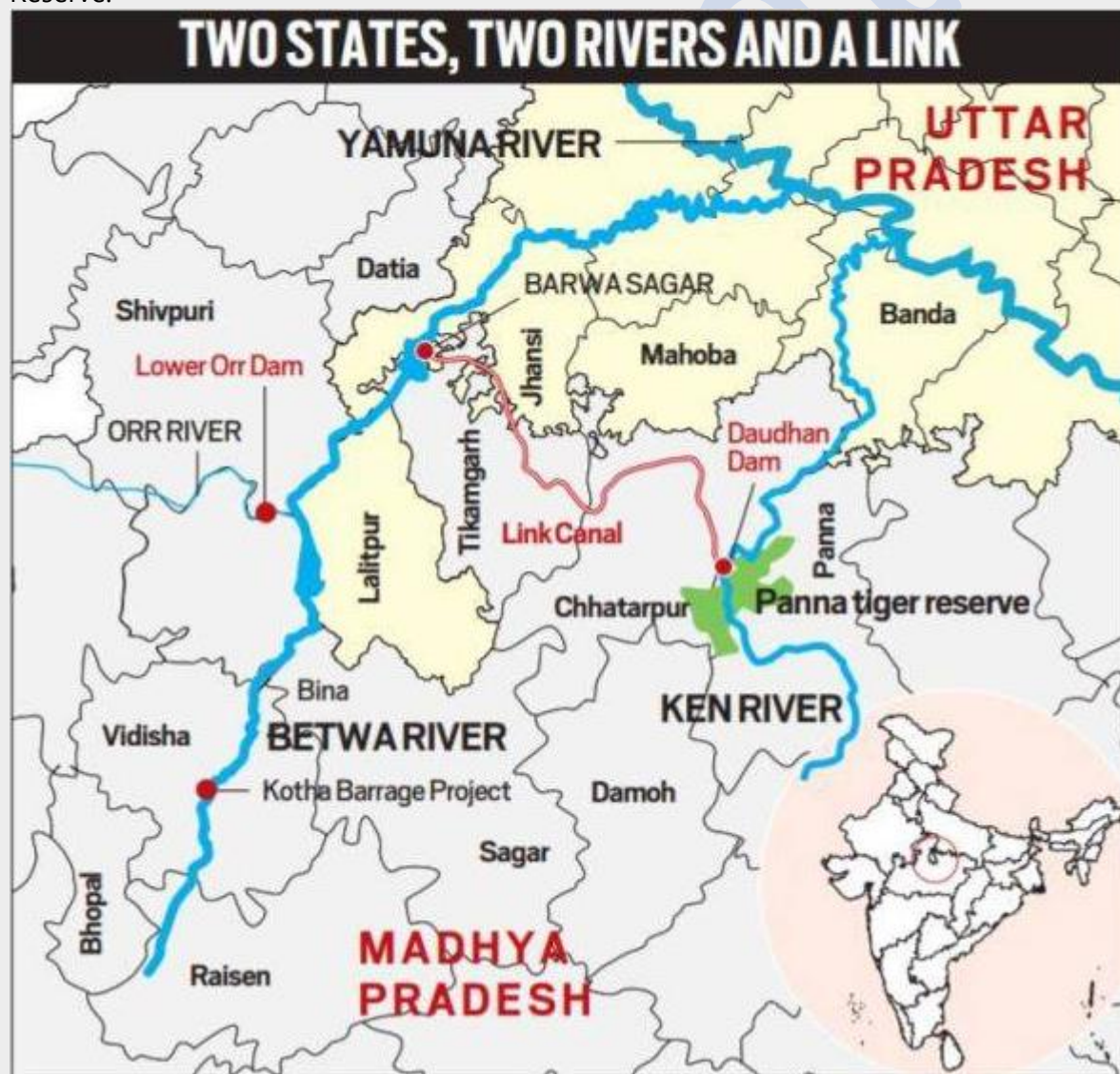
Source: Indian Express

## 2. PM Modi lays foundation stone: What is the Ken-Betwa river linking project, environmental concerns around it

### Introduction

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the Ken- Betwa River Linking National Project recently, on the 100th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The Congress criticised the PM for this, saying the project poses a threat to the Panna Tiger Reserve.



### **What is the Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP)?**

The KBLP envisages transferring water from the Ken river to the Betwa river, both tributaries of the Yamuna. The Ken-Betwa Link Canal will be 221 km in length, including a 2-km tunnel. According to the Jal Shakti Ministry, the project is expected to provide annual irrigation to 10.62 lakh hectares (8.11 lakh ha in MP and 2.51 lakh ha in UP) of land, supply drinking water to about 62 lakh people, and generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW of solar power.

It is the first project under the National Perspective Plan for interlinking of rivers, which was prepared in 1980. This plan has 16 projects under its peninsular component, including the KBLP. Apart from this, 14 links are proposed under the Himalayan rivers development plan.

The Ken-Betwa Link Project has two phases. Phase-I will involve building the Daudhan Dam complex and its subsidiary units such as the Low Level Tunnel, High Level Tunnel, Ken-Betwa Link Canal and power houses. Phase-II will involve three components — Lower Orr Dam, Bina Complex Project and Kotha Barrage.

The Union Cabinet had approved Rs 44,605 crore (at 2020-21 prices) for the KBLP project in December 2021.

PM Modi laid the foundation stone for the Daudhan Dam. Daudhan dam is 2,031 m long, out of which 1,233 metre will be earthen and the rest 798 m will be of concrete. The height of the dam will be 77 m. According to the Jal Shakti Ministry, the dam will submerge about 9,000 hectares of land, affecting 10 villages.

Infrastructure company NCC Ltd has been awarded the contract for the Daudhan Dam.

### **By when will the project be completed?**

According to the Jal Shakti Ministry, the KBLP project is proposed to be implemented in eight years.

### **When was the Ken-Betwa project agreement signed?**

On March 22, 2021, a memorandum of agreement was signed among the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the governments of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to implement the Ken-Betwa Link Project.

### **How was the project conceptualised?**

The idea of linking the Ken with the Betwa got a major push in August 2005, when a tripartite memorandum of understanding for preparation of a detailed project report (DPR) was signed among the Centre and the two states. In 2008, the Centre declared the KBLP a National Project. Later, it was included as part of the Prime Minister's package for the development of the drought-prone Bundelkhand region.

In April 2009, it was decided that the DPR would be prepared in two phases. In 2018, a comprehensive DPR, including Phase-I, II and additional area proposed by Madhya Pradesh, was prepared. It was sent to Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and the Central Water Commission in October 2018.



**Which regions will benefit from it?**

The project lies in Bundelkhand, which spreads across 13 districts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. According to the Jal Shakti Ministry, the project will be of immense benefit to the water-starved region, especially the districts of Panna, Tikamgarh, Chhatarpur, Sagar, Damoh, Datia, Vidisha, Shivpuri and Raisen of Madhya Pradesh, and Banda, Mahoba, Jhansi and Lalitpur of Uttar Pradesh. "It will pave the way for more river interlinking projects to ensure that scarcity of water does not become an inhibitor for development in the country," the Ministry said in a statement.

**What are the project's likely environmental and social impacts?**

The river-linking project has faced intense scrutiny for its potential environmental and social impact. The project will involve large-scale deforestation inside the heart of the Panna National Park and Tiger Reserve.

Also, over the years, experts have sought that hydrological data of Ken's surplus water be made public for a thorough review or fresh studies. A study published last year by IIT-Bombay scientists even found that moving large quantities of water as part of river linking projects can affect land-atmosphere interplay and feedback and lead to a mean rainfall deficit by up to 12 per cent in September.

The Supreme Court's Central Empowered Committee (CEC) had questioned the project on multiple counts while examining its wildlife clearance. The CEC had raised questions on the economic viability of the project, advocating for first exhausting other irrigation options in the upper Ken basin.

The submergence of around 98 sq km of Panna national park, where tigers had gone locally extinct in 2009, and felling of about two to three million trees has been one of the most controversial aspects of the project. The Daudhan dam is situated inside the national park.

The Union environment ministry approved its construction inside the core of the Panna tiger reserve, despite no precedent of such heavy infrastructure projects deep within national parks and tiger reserves. The CEC had also pointed out that the project will undo the successful tiger reintroduction that helped the tiger population bounce back from local extinction.

Downstream of the national park, the Daudham dam is also likely to affect the Gharial population in the Ken Gharial sanctuary along with vulture nesting sites, the CEC had noted. The dam will displace 5,228 families in Chhatarpur district and 1,400 families in Panna district due to submergence and project-related acquisition. The acquisition process has seen a lot of protests related to what locals have dubbed inadequate compensation and low benefits for Panna district.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

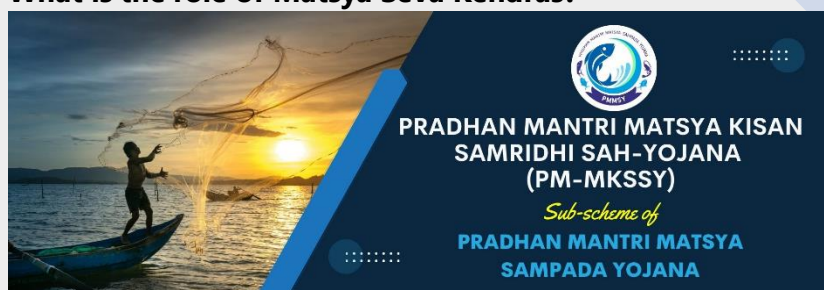
Source: Indian Express

**3. Why is strengthening fisheries extension services crucial? What support do Matsya Seva Kendras provide to fish farmers?**

## Introduction

India possesses diverse fisheries resources that provide livelihood opportunities to approximately three crore fishers and fish farmers. The country has witnessed an 83% increase in the national fish production since 2013-14, that stands at a record 175 lakh tons in 2022-23. With 75% of this coming from inland fisheries, India is the second-largest fish and aquaculture producer globally. In this backdrop, strengthening last-mile fisheries and aquaculture extension services is of paramount importance. Experts contend that such extension should provide request-based services to fishers/fish farmers on the life cycle of improved species cultured, water quality, disease, and available rearing technologies; address issues faced by seed growers and hatcheries; and conduct need-based training to promote sustainable practices and fisheries-based activities that have the potential to be viable business models.

## What is the role of Matsya Seva Kendras?



Under the flagship Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, 'Matsya Seva Kendras' (MSK) has been envisioned as one-stop solution to provide a range of extension services by trained aquaculture

professionals. The governmental assistance to set up such Kendras for women and weaker sections is available to the extent of 60%. Funds have been provided to State governments and Union Territories for operationalising 102 such Kendras. For example, the MSK in Thrissur, Kerala has a well-equipped lab for water, soil, and microbial analysis to conduct request-based disease tests, while the MSK in Nasik and Sangli districts in Maharashtra focuses on capacity building for fishers/fish farmers on varied seed/feed inputs backed with the required technology infusion.

Fostering a 'whole of government approach,' the Government of India advises MSKs to mobilise start-ups, cooperatives, fish farmers' producer organisations, joint liability groups, and self-help groups to share best practices. The latter includes regenerative and conservation management practises for both inland and marine fisheries in view of the effects of climate change.

## How do Sagar Mitras support fishers?

Another innovative extension initiative by the government is the deployment of "Sagar Mitras" in coastal States and U.T.s as a vital interface between the government and sea-borne fishers. They compile information and data on daily marine catch, price fluctuations, and requisite marketing needs at fish landing centres/harbours. They disseminate information to fishers on local regulations, weather forecasts, natural calamities, hygienic fish handling, and potential fishing zones in the seas.

## How can extension services be improved?

To make the extension and advisory services in fisheries and aquaculture more robust the need of the hour is twofold. First, the above initiatives should be institutionally converged with the

already networked field extension machinery of over 700 Indian Council of Agricultural Research-driven Krishi Vigyan Kendras and the State governments and U.T.s extension services. Second, promoting digital outreach. The National Fisheries Development Board has initiated a nationwide virtual learning platform, 'AquaBazaar,' that enables experts to clarify basic concepts and provide practical demonstrations to fishers on breeding/seed production of commercially important fish.

In this context, the World Bank-assisted Government of India project to formalise the fisheries and aquaculture sector is a boon indeed. It aims to create work-based digital identities for all fishers and fish farmers in the country, thereby strengthening their extension, capacity building, and awareness generation needs.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu