

Inter-state water issues between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

Following a meeting in July 2025, the Union government decided to form a high-level expert committee to address long-pending inter-state water disputes between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh regarding the Krishna and Godavari rivers. The decision came after both states, with new chief ministers, met with Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil in a more amicable atmosphere than in the past.

Key points of the agreement

- **Expert committee formation:** A committee of senior officials and technical experts from both states and the central government will be constituted. It has been tasked with studying outstanding concerns and recommending viable, equitable solutions.
- **Telemetry systems:** Both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have agreed to install telemetry devices for real-time monitoring of water flows within the Krishna Basin. This addresses a long-standing demand from Telangana to accurately measure water usage.
- **Krishna River Management Board (KRMB):** The headquarters of the KRMB will be located in Vijayawada/Amaravati, in Andhra Pradesh.
- **Godavari River Management Board (GRMB):** The GRMB will remain in Hyderabad, in Telangana.
- **Srisaïlam dam maintenance:** Both states have agreed to take immediate measures for the maintenance and repair of the critical Srisaïlam dam.
- **Time-bound resolution:** The committee was directed to work swiftly and provide a report within 30 days of its formation.

Extended tribunal term

The existing Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal (KWDT) was given a one-year extension until July 31, 2026, to submit its final report, highlighting the complexity and long-standing nature of the dispute.

Explanation of Exam Oriented Key Terms

01

Legal provisions for water disputes in India

Legal provisions for water disputes in India are primarily governed by Article 262 of the Constitution and the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956. The Constitution mandates that Parliament can legislate for adjudicating water disputes, leading to the 1956 Act.

This Act allows for the formation of Water Disputes Tribunals by the Central Government if negotiations between states fail, whose decisions are binding. Additionally, the River Boards Act, 1956, enables the formation of boards to manage interstate river basins, though none have been established to date.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 262 of the Constitution:** This provision empowers the Parliament to enact a law providing for the adjudication of disputes concerning the use, distribution, or control of water from inter-state rivers or river valleys.

Statutory Provisions

- **The River Boards Act, 1956:** This Act enables the Central Government to establish River Boards for the regulation and development of inter-state rivers and river valleys.
- **The Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956:** This landmark legislation was passed under Article 262 to provide a framework for resolving water disputes between Indian states.
 - **Tribunal Formation:** Under this Act, if a State Government requests the Central Government to resolve a water dispute and negotiations fail, the Central Government must constitute a Water Disputes Tribunal.
 - **Tribunal Composition and Award:** The Tribunal, comprising a Chairman and other members, adjudicates the dispute. Its decision is final and binding on the participating states.
 - **Enforcement:** The Central Government can frame schemes to implement the Tribunal's award.

Dispute Resolution Process

- **Negotiations:** The preferred first step is to resolve the dispute through mutual discussions and negotiations between the concerned states.
- **Tribunal Formation:** If negotiations are unsuccessful, a state can request the Central Government to constitute a Water Disputes Tribunal.
- **Adjudication:** The Tribunal hears the case and delivers a final, binding decision.
- **Implementation:** The Central Government is then responsible for framing a scheme to implement the award of the Tribunal.

02

Establishment of Tribunal for Inter-State River Water Disputes

Rivers in India that have had or currently have a river water tribunal are the Ravi & Beas, Cauvery, Krishna, Mahanadi, Vansadhara, Mahadayi (also known as Mandovi), and the Godavari and Narmada rivers.

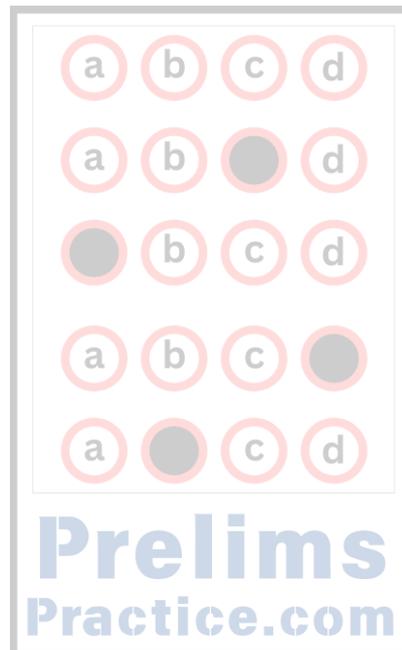
While the Godavari, Narmada, and Cauvery tribunals have been dissolved after giving their awards or implementing management schemes, tribunals are still active for Ravi & Beas, Mahanadi, Vansadhara, and Mahadayi.

Active tribunals

- **Krishna:** The Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II was constituted in 2004 to address disputes between Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Mahanadi:** The Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal was formed in 2018 to adjudicate the dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh.
- **Mahadayi (or Mandovi):** The Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal was constituted in 2010 to address the dispute between Goa, Karnataka, and Maharashtra.
- **Ravi and Beas:** The Ravi & Beas Water Tribunal was formed in 1986 to verify the water claims of Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan. While it submitted its report, related matters are still sub judice.
- **Vansadhara:** The Vansadhara Water Disputes Tribunal was constituted in 2010 for the dispute between Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

Tribunals that have delivered awards

- Godavari: The Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal was constituted in 1969 and delivered its award in 1980.
- Krishna: The Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-I was constituted in 1969 and delivered its award in 1976.
- Narmada: The Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal was constituted in 1969 and delivered its award in 1979.
- Cauvery: The Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal was established in 1990. Its final decision was gazetted in 2013, and the tribunal was dissolved in 2018 after the Supreme Court modified its verdict. The Cauvery Water Management Authority was subsequently constituted to implement the award.



Practice Questions:

1. With reference to the inter-state water disputes between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, consider the following statements:

- I. The Union government's decision to form an expert committee is part of the larger framework under Article 262 of the Constitution which provides for the adjudication of inter-state water disputes
- II. The committee will operate under the direct jurisdiction of the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti and its decisions will be legally binding on both states
- III. The formation of this committee is intended to improve the overall water management system by integrating advanced technologies like drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting at the state level.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

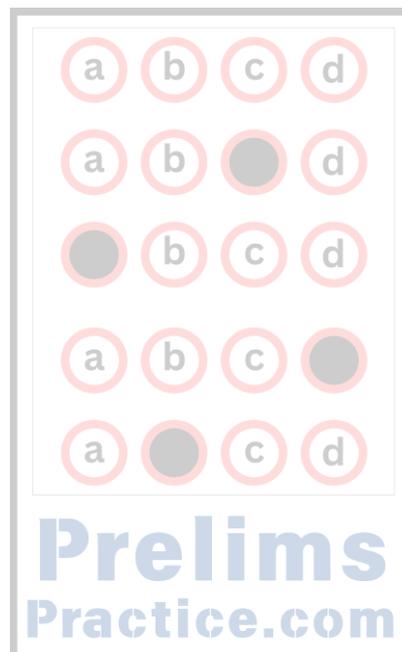
- a) I only
- b) I and II only
- c) II and III only
- d) I, II and III

Answer: a

Explanation: Statement I is Correct: The decision to form the committee is in line with the broader constitutional framework for resolving inter-state water disputes, which is governed by Article 262 of the Constitution and the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956. **Statement II Incorrect:** While the committee functions under the Union government, its decisions are not legally binding. The authority to issue legally binding decisions rests with a Water Disputes Tribunal constituted under the Act. **Statement III Incorrect:** The primary mandate of this committee is to resolve the dispute by studying existing issues and proposing solutions. While improved water management is a long-term goal, this is not the committee's immediate task. Technologies like drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting are part of broader strategies for water conservation and are not directly managed by this specific committee.

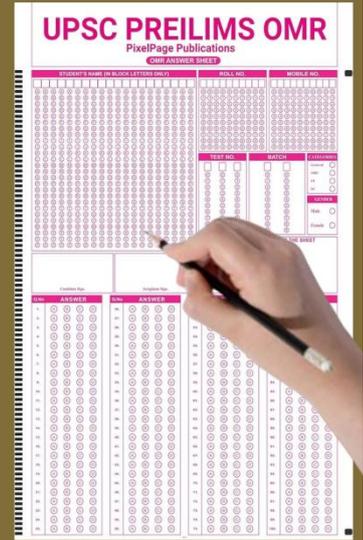
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