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Article For Reading - Pushed through: On mega projects

Prime Minister Narendra Modi **flagging off** work on the Ken-Betwa river interlinking project signalled that the national government is **unbothered** by the wide-ranging opposition to it. At a budgeted cost of ₹44,605 crore, the project will draw supposedly “excess” water away from the Ken river basin towards the Betwa river basin and thereon to farmland and human settlements. When the Union Cabinet approved the project in 2021, the National Green Tribunal was still deliberating a challenge to its green clearance. This was typical of the state’s tendency to pardon businesses found in violation of environmental laws after they had made considerable investments. The government itself has ignored critical comments from experts, including members of an empowered committee appointed by the Supreme Court, and **bypassed** due process. The law has strict terms for allowing hydroelectric power projects in ecologically sensitive areas — the Daudhan Dam will be erected inside the Panna Tiger Reserve — but there is little evidence of such scrutiny. Work on the dam will destroy lakhs of trees and destabilise fragile ecosystems. The government has also refused to release hydrological data of the basins claiming they are sensitive by virtue of being subsets of the international Ganga basin.

That a river interlink will water fields and **quench** thirst is **irrefutable**, but for how long? Various studies have asserted that the Ken and the Betwa basins suffer floods and droughts together, that the subcontinent's rainfall and sedimentation patterns stand to be altered, and that the Betwa basin can be **replenished** more affordably by maintaining environmental flows and **bolstering** natural storage. The government's principal claim is that the Ken and the Betwa basins are respectively water-surplus and water-deficient. This is **disingenuous**: the Betwa basin is water-deficient strictly because it hosts several lakh hectares of irrigated cropland. Should the demand in the Ken basin increase, both areas will suffer. Experts have instead suggested that the project is a ploy to pacify the electorate in Bundelkhand — as its approval months ahead of State polls in Uttar Pradesh also suggested — and/or to improve water supply to reservoirs in the lower Betwa thanks to other upstream blockades. The project seems more the product of political **expediency** and self-image than current ecological sense. The more resources the government sinks into it, the more unlikely changing or reversing course will become in the face of adverse developments. When they come to pass, the responsibility and costs of mitigating the adverse consequences of this and other projects, including the recently launched Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal link, will fall to the people.

Summary –

The Ken-Betwa river interlinking project, budgeted at ₹44,605 crore, aims to transfer water from the Ken basin to the Betwa basin, but faces significant criticism for bypassing environmental laws, ignoring expert concerns, and risking ecological damage, including the Panna Tiger Reserve. Critics argue the project is driven by political motives rather than ecological necessity, with claims of water surplus and deficiency being misleading. Experts suggest alternative, more sustainable solutions. The project's long-term viability and environmental consequences remain questionable, with potential mitigation costs likely to burden the public.

vocabulary –

1. Expediency (noun) तत्कालीनता

Meaning = The quality of being convenient and practical despite possibly being improper or immoral.

Synonym: Convenience, pragmatism

Antonyms: Inconvenience, impracticality.

Example: The politician's decision was guided by expediency rather than principle.

2. Unbothered (adjective) बेफिक्र

Meaning = Showing or feeling no concern or interest.

Synonym: Unconcerned, indifferent.

Antonym: Concerned, anxious

Example: She remained unbothered by the chaos around her.

3. Flagging off (phrasal verb) शुभारंभ करना

Meaning= To start or signal the beginning of an event, especially a race or project.

Synonym: Initiating, commencing

Antonym: Concluding, ending

Example: The marathon was flagged off by the chief guest at 6 a.m.

4. Replenish (verb) पुनः पूर्ति करना

Meaning= Restore to a former level or condition.

Synonym: Refill, recharge

Antonym: Deplete, exhaust

Example: We need to replenish our stock of supplies before the next shipment.

5. Disingenuous (adjective) कपटपूर्ण

Meaning = Not candid or sincere, typically by pretending that one knows less about something than one really does.

Synonym: Insincere, deceitful.

Antonym: Sincere, honest

Example: His apology seemed disingenuous and didn't convince anyone.

6. Quench (verb) प्यास बुझाना

Meaning= Satisfy (one's thirst) by drinking.

Synonym: Satisfy, slake.

Antonym: Dehydrate, parch

Example: He quenched his thirst with a glass of cold water.

7. Irrefutable (adjective) अखंडनीय

Meaning = Impossible to deny or disprove.

Synonym: Unquestionable, undeniable

Antonym: Disputable, questionable

Example: The evidence provided was irrefutable and led to a quick verdict.

8. Bolster (Verb) मजबूत करना

Meaning – To support, strengthen, or reinforce something.

Synonyms – Support, Strengthen, Reinforce

Antonyms – Undermine, Weaken, Diminish

Example – The government announced new policies to bolster the economy during the recession.

9. Bypassed (Verb) नजरअंदाज किया" या "उपेक्षा की" /

To avoid, ignore, or go around something, often in order to achieve a goal more quickly or easily.

Synonyms – Skipped, Circumvented, Avoided, Dodged, Evaded.

Antonyms – Followed, Acknowledged, Observed

Example – The politician cleverly bypassed the controversial question during the interview.

10. Fragile (adjective) नाजुक

Meaning= Easily broken or damaged.

Synonym: Delicate, brittle

Antonym: Strong, sturdy

Sentence: The fragile vase needs to be handled with care.