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### Environment

#### Mekedatu Project

##### Why in News?

Recently, Govt. of Karnataka has decided to challenge the National Green Tribunal's (NGT) decision to appoint a joint committee to look into allegations of unauthorized construction activity taking place near Mekedatu Dam Project.

Mekedatu, is a **deep gorge** situated at the confluence of the rivers **Cauvery** and one of its tributary **Arkavathi**.

##### About Mekedatu Project:

- It aims to store and supply water for drinking purposes to the Bengaluru city.
- Around 400 megawatts of power is proposed to be generated through this project.
- It is awaiting approval from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, GoI.
- Approval from MoEF&CC is crucial since 63% of the forest area of the **Cauvery**

**Wildlife Sanctuary** will be submerged under the project.

- A conflict emerged in 2018, when Tamil Nadu approached the Supreme Court (SC) against the project even though Karnataka held that it would not affect the flow of water to lower riparian state Tamil Nadu.

#### Blackbucks

##### Why in News?

- Odisha's blackbuck population has doubled in the last six years, as per the figures released by the chief conservator of forest (wildlife).
- Blackbucks are found only in the **Ganjam district** in the southern part of Odisha.
- Protection status:
  - **Schedule-1** Animal according to the WPA, 1972 (amended in 1992).
  - **IUCN Status: Vulnerable**
- In Odisha, the blackbuck is known as **Krushnasara Mruga**.

##### Related Information:

- **Bishnoi community** of Rajasthan is popular for their conservation efforts to protect **blackbuck and Chinkara**.

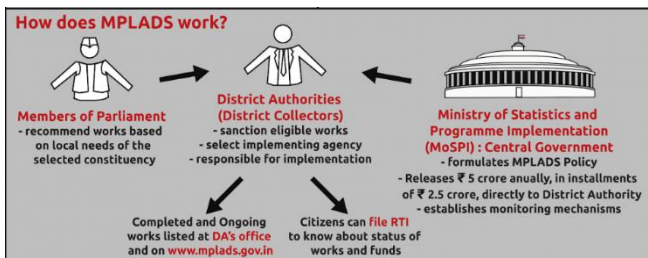


### Polity and Governance

#### MPLAD Scheme

##### Why in News?

- Recently, MPs have written to the speaker Om Birla to restart the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS). GoI under Disaster Management Act suspended MPLAD scheme in April 2020.



### About MPLADS:

- It was launched in December, 1993.
- It seeks to provide a mechanism for the MPs to **recommend** developmental works, creation of durable community assets and for provision of basic facilities like community infrastructure, based on locally felt requirements.
- It is fully funded by the Government of India.
- The annual MPLADS fund entitlement per MP for his constituency is ₹5 crore.

### Key Features:

- MPs must recommend every year, works costing at least 15 percent of the MPLADS entitlement for areas inhabited by SC population and 7.5 per cent for areas inhabited by ST population.
- Funds are released in the form of grant-in-aid **directly** to the **district** authorities.
- The funds so released under the scheme are **non-lapsable**.
- The MPs only have a **recommendatory** role under the MPLAD scheme.
- The **district authority** is empowered to examine the eligibility of works, sanction funds and select the implementing

agencies, supervise overall execution, and monitor the scheme at the ground level.

### Recommendation of works:

- The elected MPs of Lok Sabha can recommend works in their **respective constituencies**.
- The elected MPs of the Rajya Sabha can recommend works anywhere in **the state from which they are elected**.
- Nominated members of both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha can select works for implementation **anywhere in the country**.

### National Green Tribunal (NGT)

#### Why in News?

Recently, NGT withheld the permission on expansion of NTPC plant in Telangana.

#### About NGT:

- It is an **statutory** body set up under the **National Green Tribunal Act, 2010**.
- It was created for effective and expeditious disposal of cases pertaining to environmental protection, conservation of forests and of other natural resources.
- With the establishment of the NGT, India became the **third** country in the world to set up a specialised environmental tribunal, after **Australia** and **New Zealand**.
- NGT is mandated to dispose of the applications or appeals finally within 6 months of their filing.
- The NGT has five places of sittings:
  - New Delhi (Principal place of sitting)
  - Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai

#### Composition of NGT

- NGT comprises of the
  - Chairperson,
  - the Judicial Members, and
  - Expert Members.

- They hold office for **term of five years** and are they are **not eligible** for reappointment.
- The Chairperson of NGT is **appointed by the GoI** in consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- There are to be **at least 10 and maximum 20** full time Judicial members and Expert Members in the NGT.

#### **Powers & Jurisdiction of NGT:**

- It has jurisdiction over **all civil cases** involving substantial question relating to environment (including enforcement of any legal right relating to environment).
- It also has **appellate jurisdiction** to hear appeal as a Court (Tribunal).
- It is **not bound** by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure (CrPC) 1908, but are be guided by **principles of natural justice**.
- While passing any order/decision/ decree, it applies principles of **sustainable development**, the **precautionary principle** and the **polluter pays principle**.
- It is empowered by an order, to provide relief and compensation to
  - the victims of pollution and other environmental damage.
  - for restitution of property damaged, and
  - for restitution of the environment for such area or other areas, as the it may think fit.
- The order/decision/award of NGT is executable as a decree of a **civil court**.
- The NGT Act also empowers NGT to enforce a penalty for non-compliance.
- An appeal against order/decision/ award of the NGT lies directly to the **Supreme Court**, generally **within ninety days** from the date of communication.

The NGT deals with **civil cases** under the following **seven laws** related to the environment:

- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974,
- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977,
- The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980,
- The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981,
- The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986,
- The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991 and
- The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

## **Places in News**

### **Cauvery (Kaveri) River**

- **Source:** The river originates near **Brahmagiri Hill** of the Western Ghats in southwestern **Karnataka**.
- **Drainage Basin: Karnataka and Tamil Nadu,**
  - The river falls into **Bay of Bengal** towards the south of Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu.
  - Prior to falling the river breaks into many distributaries forming a wide delta called the **Garden of southern India**.
- **Tributaries:** Arkavathi, Shimsa, Kabini, Hemavathi, Lakshmana Theertha, and Harangi.

