

TODAY'S IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS

UPSC MAINS

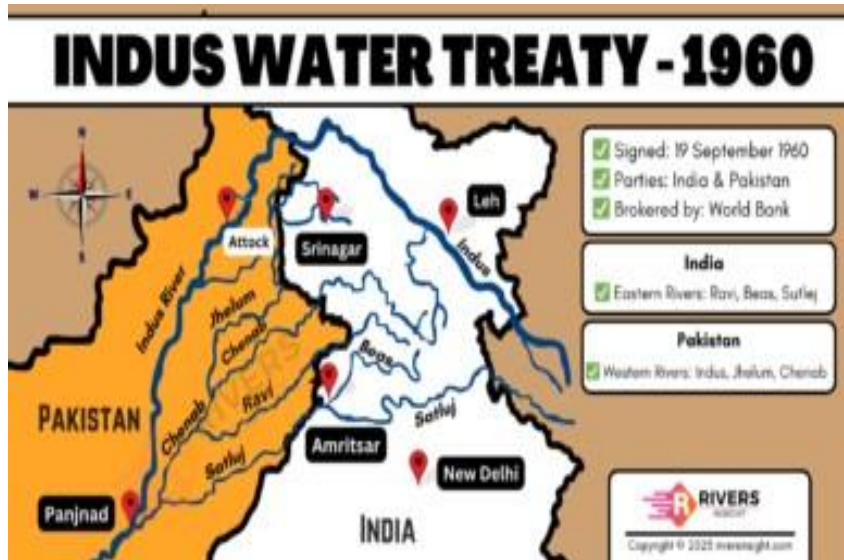
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INDUS WATER TREATY

Source: The post is based on the article published in “The Hindu” on 27.04.2025.

In News: Recently, Indian government suspended unilaterally indus water treaty.

Syllabus: Mains – GS II (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS-INDIA AND NEIBOURHOOD)



Indus Water Treaty

The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) is a **bilateral water-distribution agreement between India and Pakistan, brokered by the World Bank**, to manage the use of the Indus River system's waters. It was signed on **19 September 1960** in Karachi by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistani President Ayub Khan.

Expiry: Officially, the treaty had **no fixed expiry**, but India suspended it in April 2025 following heightened tensions.

Geography

The Indus River system originates in **Tibet** and flows through India and eventually draining into the Arabian Sea.

Pakistan,

Key Provisions of the Indus Water Treaty

1. River Allocation

The Indus River system's six rivers are divided:

- ❖ **Eastern Rivers** (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej): **Allocated to India** for unrestricted use.
- ❖ **Western Rivers** (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab): Allocated to Pakistan for unrestricted use, with **limited rights for India** (domestic, non-consumptive, limited irrigation, and run-of-the-river hydropower).
- ❖ About 80% of the Indus system's water is allocated to Pakistan, and **20% to India**.

2. Water Usage Rights

India can use western rivers' water for:

- ❖ Domestic use
- ❖ Non-consumptive use (e.g., navigation, fisheries)
- ❖ Limited irrigation (up to 701,000 acres)
- ❖ Run-of-the-river hydropower projects, with strict design and operational constraints to minimize storage.
- ❖ India must share project designs with Pakistan; Pakistan can object within three months.

3. Permanent Indus Commission (PIC)

- ❖ A bilateral commission with **one commissioner from each country** oversees treaty implementation, data exchange, and dispute resolution.
- ❖ The PIC must meet at least **once a year** and is the **first forum** for resolving disputes.

4. Dispute Resolution Mechanism

Three-tiered process:

- ❖ **Permanent Indus Commission:** Initial discussion and resolution.
- ❖ **Neutral Expert:** Appointed by the World Bank if the PIC fails to resolve a technical difference.

- ❖ **Court of Arbitration:** For unresolved disputes or treaty interpretation issues, with a binding decision.

5. Flood and Pollution Provisions

- ❖ Both countries must **avoid causing material damage** to each other through flood control or pollution.
- ❖ Use of river channels for **flood discharge is free** and not subject to limitation by either party.

6. Data Sharing and Notification

Both sides must **notify and share information** on planned projects and extraordinary water discharges that could affect the other country.

7. Storage and Infrastructure

- ❖ India's **storage** on **western rivers** is **strictly limited** (not exceeding 1.54 billion m³ for new storage, plus limits for hydropower and flood storage).
- ❖ Pakistan is allowed to build large storage dams on its side.

Significance

❖ Conflict Prevention:

The IWT is considered one of the most **successful international water-sharing agreements**, having survived multiple wars and periods of tension between India and Pakistan.

❖ Economic Impact:

The treaty is vital for Pakistan's **agriculture** and **hydropower**, as the Indus system is its primary water source. For India, it enables **development in the northern states** using eastern rivers.

❖ Diplomatic Mechanism:

The Permanent Indus Commission provides a **continuous platform for dialogue** and technical cooperation, helping to resolve disputes peacefully.

❖ Regional Stability:

The IWT has contributed to regional stability by providing a structured approach to a **potentially contentious resource**, even when broader diplomatic relations have been strained.

Recent Changes in the Indus Water Treaty

In April 2025, India **suspended the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)** with Pakistan following a deadly **terror attack in Pahalgam**, Jammu and Kashmir. This is the **first time** since the treaty's

signing in 1960 that such a move has been made. India cited Pakistan's continued support for cross-border terrorism as the reason for this step.

How the Suspension Affects Both Countries

Impact on India:

- ❖ India is **no longer obliged to notify Pakistan** about new projects or share data on river flows, nor allow Pakistani officials to inspect Indian infrastructure on the western rivers.
- ❖ India can now **accelerate dam construction and reservoir projects** in Jammu & Kashmir, potentially increasing its ability to store and use water from the western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab).
- ❖ In the **short term**, India's limited storage and diversion infrastructure means it **cannot immediately cut off or significantly reduce** water flows to Pakistan.
- ❖ Over the long term, India could build **more storage and diversion facilities**, giving it greater leverage and flexibility in water management.

Impact on Pakistan:

- ❖ Pakistan **loses access to critical data** and advance warnings about river flows, increasing its vulnerability to droughts and floods.
- ❖ The threat of reduced water flows poses a **serious risk to Pakistan's agriculture**, which depends on the Indus system for 80% of its irrigated land.
- ❖ The suspension is a major **diplomatic setback** and could trigger **legal challenges** or international mediation efforts by Pakistan.
- ❖ Pakistan's concerns about Indian dam projects and water control are heightened, as it can no longer monitor or object to new Indian infrastructure on the western rivers.