India & Pak. spar over Indus water talks

Context:

- India has refused a request by Pakistan to hold a meeting on issues around the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) at the Attari checkpost near the India-Pakistan border.
- The last such meeting between the two countries was in October 2019 in Islamabad.
- As per the agreement in IWT, a meeting was to be scheduled in India before March 31, 2020.
- The practice at the IWT meetings is that they are led by Indus Water Commissioners from both countries.
- A range of issues on the construction of dams and hydropower projects concerning the Indus river system are discussed.

Important points:

- Evolving a procedure to solve differences on technical aspects governing the construction of the Ratle run-of-the-river (RoR) project on the Chenab in the Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir.
- A consensus is yet to be reached upon a final resolution on the design parameters of this hydropower project.
- India has called for the appointment of a ‘neutral’ party.
- Pakistan favours a Court of Arbitration to agree upon a final resolution.

Issue:

- According to the terms of the IWT, India has the right to build RoR projects on the three ‘western’ rivers — the Chenab, Jhelum and Indus — provided it does so without substantially impeding water flow in Pakistan downstream.
- Pakistan believes that the project’s current design does pose a serious impediment and has told the World Bank that it wants a Court of Arbitration (CoA) set up to decide on the issue.
- India says this is only a technical issue and mutually solvable. It has agreed to a ‘neutral party’ since a CoA potentially could stall any construction on all Indus projects.