**Syllabus subtopic:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

**News:** The Kerala State government is saying that it is taking all precautions to prevent the implementation of the **Pamba-Achankovil-Vaippar river link project.**

**For Prelims focus:** ILR- approved projects and their brief overview.

**For Mains focus:** Need for and significance of interlinking of rivers.

**Issue**

Kerala is not allowing **Pamba-Achankovil** to be connected with the **Vaippar river** in Tamil Nadu under the inter-linking of rivers project. Kerala asserts that there is no excess water in rivers in the state.

**Background:**

The river link proposal is **listed among the river linking projects of the NWDA.** It **envisages diversion of 634 cubic millimeters of water from the Pamba and Achankovil rivers in Kerala to the Vaippar basin in Tamil Nadu.**

**Need for interlinking of rivers:**

The interlinking project aims to link India’s rivers by a network of reservoirs and canals that will allow for their water capacities to be shared and redistributed. According to some experts, this is an engineered panacea that will reduce persistent floods in some parts and water shortages in other parts besides facilitating the generation of hydroelectricity for an increasingly power hungry country.

**Benefits and significance of interlinking:**

1. **Enhances water and food security** of the country and it is essential for providing water to drought prone and water deficit areas.
2. **Proper utilization:** River interlinking projects envisage that the surplus water available in Himalayan Rivers is transferred to the areas where water supply is not adequate in the Peninsular India. Also, huge quantities of water from several Peninsular rivers drain unutilized into the sea, and river interlinking projects help transfer this water to water areas.
deficit areas of Peninsular India.

3. **Boost to agriculture**: The main occupation of rural India is agriculture and if monsoon fails in a year, then agricultural activities come to a standstill and this will aggravate rural poverty. Interlinking of rivers will be a practical solution for this problem, because the water can be stored or water can be transferred from water surplus area to deficit.

4. **Disaster mitigation**: The Ganga Basin, Brahmaputra basin sees floods almost every year. In order to avoid this, the water from these areas has to be diverted to other areas where there is scarcity of water. This can be achieved by linking the rivers. There is a two way advantage with this – floods will be controlled and scarcity of water will be reduced.

5. **Transportation**: Interlinking of rivers will also have commercial importance on a longer run. This can be used as inland waterways and which helps in faster movement of goods from one place to other.

6. **Employment generation**: Interlinking also creates a new occupation for people living in and around these canals and it can be the main areas of fishing in India.

**Concerns associated:**

- Interlinking of rivers will cause **huge amount of distortion in the existing environment**. In order to create canals and reservoirs, there will be mass deforestation. This will have impact on rains and in turn affect the whole cycle of life.
- Usually rivers **change their course and direction** in about 100 years and if this happens after interlinking, then the project will not be feasible for a longer run.
- Due to interlinking of rivers, **there will be decrease in the amount of fresh water entering seas** and this will cause a serious threat to the marine life system and will be a major ecological disaster.
- Due to the creation of Canals and Reservoirs, **huge amount of area which is occupied by the people will be submerged** leading to displacement of people and government will have to spend more to rehabilitate these people.
- **The amount required for these projects is so huge** that government will have to take loans from the foreign sources which would increase the burden on the government and country will fall in a debt trap.