



PrepAlpine

— Preparation Meets Precision —

CURRENT AFFAIRS

For UPSC Civil Services Examination Aspirants



RESEARCH-DRIVEN
CONTENT



DAILY COVERAGE
WITH MAINS FOCUS



EXAM-READY
APPROACH

Stay **Informed**. Stay **Ahead**. Succeed.

Copyright © 2025 PrepAlpine

All Rights Reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means—whether photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods—without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law.

For permission requests, please write to:

PrepAlpine

Email: info@PrepAlpine.com

Website: PrepAlpine.com

Disclaimer

The information contained in this book has been prepared solely for educational purposes. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, PrepAlpine makes no representations or warranties of any kind and accepts no liability for any errors or omissions. The use of any content is solely at the reader's discretion and risk.

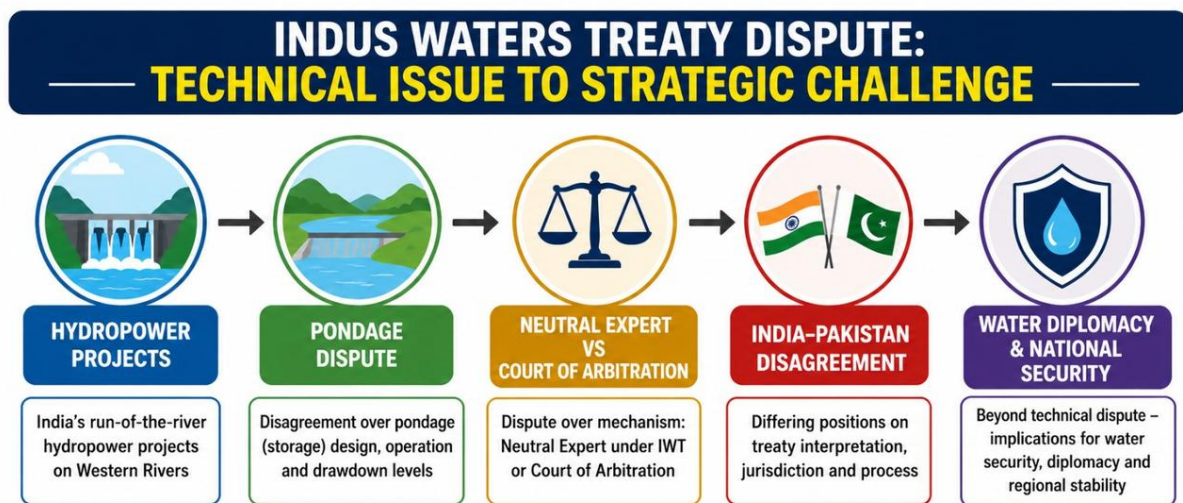
DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS DATED 17.05.2026

GS Paper II: International Relations

1. Indus Waters Treaty Dispute: India Rejects Court of Arbitration's Pondage Award

a. Introduction

India has rejected the award issued by the Court of Arbitration (CoA) regarding the permissible pondage at Indian hydroelectric projects on the Indus river system. The Government has reiterated that it does not recognise the tribunal as legally constituted and has maintained that its decision to keep the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), 1960, in abeyance continues to remain in force.



b. Key Developments

The dispute arose after the Court of Arbitration, constituted in 2023 at Pakistan's request, reportedly issued an award concerning the maximum pondage permissible in India's run-of-river hydroelectric projects. The controversy primarily relates to the Kishenganga and Ratle Hydroelectric Projects in Jammu and Kashmir.

India has categorically rejected the tribunal, describing it as illegally constituted, and has declared all its proceedings and awards to be null and void. According to India, the dispute falls within the jurisdiction of the Neutral Expert mechanism, which it considers to be the appropriate forum under the provisions of the Indus Waters Treaty.

The Government has further reiterated that the Indus Waters Treaty remains in abeyance, a position adopted following the Pahalgam terrorist attack in April 2025. India has argued that treaty obligations cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader security environment and the continued challenge of cross-border terrorism.

c. What is Pondage?

Pondage refers to the temporary storage of water behind a run-of-river hydroelectric project to regulate short-term fluctuations in electricity generation. Unlike large storage reservoirs, pondage is designed primarily to provide operational flexibility rather than long-term water storage.

By storing limited quantities of water during periods of low electricity demand and releasing it during peak demand, pondage enables power stations to generate electricity more efficiently and reliably.

Pakistan contends that excessive pondage could enable India to influence downstream river flows beyond what is permitted under the Treaty. India, however, maintains that the Treaty expressly allows

limited storage necessary for the efficient operation of run-of-river hydroelectric projects and that such storage does not amount to prohibited water diversion.

Beyond the technical disagreement, the dispute has wider implications for bilateral relations, treaty implementation and international dispute settlement.

DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF PONDAGE			
 INDIA'S POSITION	VS	PAKISTAN'S POSITION 	
 Allowed under IWT		Excess pondage may alter downstream flows	
 Operational flexibility		Potential treaty violation	
 No prohibited diversion		Risk of flow manipulation	
 Neutral Expert is appropriate		Court of Arbitration is appropriate	

d. Significance

- **Strategic Dimension of Water Diplomacy:** The dispute reflects the continuing deterioration in India–Pakistan bilateral relations, with water-sharing becoming increasingly intertwined with broader strategic and security concerns.
- **Divergent Interpretation of the Treaty:** The controversy highlights differing interpretations of the Indus Waters Treaty, particularly regarding the technical design and operational flexibility of run-of-river hydroelectric projects. It demonstrates how engineering provisions can evolve into significant diplomatic and legal disputes.
- **Link Between Security and Treaty Obligations:** India's position reinforces its argument that international treaty obligations cannot be viewed in isolation from persistent cross-border terrorism, thereby introducing a broader strategic dimension into the implementation of bilateral agreements.
- **Questions over International Dispute Resolution:** The controversy also raises important questions regarding the legitimacy of parallel dispute-resolution mechanisms under international treaties. Simultaneous proceedings before different forums risk creating legal uncertainty and weakening confidence in treaty-based dispute settlement.

e. Concerns

- **Erosion of Treaty Credibility:** The prolonged legal and diplomatic deadlock may erode confidence in the Indus Waters Treaty, which has long been regarded as one of the world's most successful and durable transboundary water-sharing agreements.
- **Conflicting Legal Interpretations:** The simultaneous functioning of the Neutral Expert and the Court of Arbitration creates the possibility of conflicting legal interpretations, thereby complicating the implementation of treaty provisions.

- **Regional Instability:** Continued disagreement over hydroelectric projects could further aggravate regional tensions, delay infrastructure development and reduce opportunities for constructive cooperation in transboundary river management.

While the present dispute has deep legal and political dimensions, a durable solution requires strengthening institutional dialogue and cooperative water governance.

f. Way Forward

- **Respect Treaty-Based Mechanisms:** Both countries should seek to resolve differences through the dispute-resolution mechanisms provided under the Treaty, while respecting mutually accepted legal procedures.
- **Strengthen Technical Dialogue:** Greater emphasis should be placed on technical dialogue and legal engagement so that legitimate developmental requirements are balanced with downstream concerns.
- **Modernise Water Cooperation:** In the longer term, both sides may consider modernising aspects of water cooperation through bilateral engagement to address evolving hydrological conditions, technological developments and contemporary security challenges.
- **Adopt an Integrated Approach:** Sustainable management of shared river systems ultimately requires a framework that balances equitable water utilisation, environmental sustainability, developmental needs and national security considerations.

Conclusion

The Indus Waters Treaty dispute illustrates how technical issues of hydropower design can evolve into complex questions of international law, diplomacy and national security. While both India and Pakistan continue to interpret the Treaty differently, preserving long-term stability over the shared Indus river system will require a balanced approach that upholds legitimate developmental interests, ensures effective dispute resolution and promotes cooperative management of transboundary water resources.

Reader's Note — About This Current Affairs Compilation

Dear Aspirant,

This document is part of the PrepAlpine Current Affairs Series — designed to bring clarity, structure, and precision to your daily UPSC learning.

While every effort has been made to balance depth with brevity, please keep the following in mind:

1. Orientation & Purpose

This compilation is curated primarily from the UPSC Mains perspective — with emphasis on conceptual clarity, analytical depth, and interlinkages across GS papers.

However, the PrepAlpine team is simultaneously developing a dedicated Prelims-focused Current Affairs Series, designed for:

- factual coverage
- data recall
- Prelims-style MCQs
- objective pattern analysis

This Prelims Edition will be released separately as a standalone publication.

2. Content Length

Some sections may feel shorter or longer depending on topic relevance and news density. To fit your personal preference, you may freely resize or summarize sections using any LLM tool (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.) at your convenience.

3. Format Flexibility

The formatting combines:

- paragraphs
- lists
- tables
- visual cues

—all optimised for retention.

If you prefer a specific style (lists → paras, paras → tables, etc.), feel free to convert using any free LLM.

4. Monthly Current Affairs Release

The complete Monthly Current Affairs Module will be released soon, optimized to a compact 100–150 pages — comprehensive yet concise, exam-ready, and revision-efficient.

PrepAlpine