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Kalai-II Hydroelectric Project: 1,200 MW on the Lohit River

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ECONOMY

GEOGRAPHY

ENVIRONMENT

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

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Kalai-II Hydroelectric Project: 1,200 MW on the Lohit River

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WHY IN NEWS

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the ₹14,105.83 crore Kalai-II run-of-river hydroelectric project on the Lohit River in Anjaw District, Arunachal Pradesh. It is the **first hydro project in the Lohit Basin** and will be implemented as a joint venture between THDC India Limited (an NTPC subsidiary) and the Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

PARAMETER	DETAILS
Name	Kalai-II Hydroelectric Project
Type	Run-of-River (RoR) — no large reservoir
Installed capacity	1,200 MW (6 × 190 MW + 1 × 60 MW = 7 units)
Annual generation	4,852.95 million units (MU)
Project cost	₹14,105.83 crore
Location	Lohit River, Anjaw District , Arunachal Pradesh
Approving body	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)
Implementing agency	THDC India Limited (JV partner) + Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh
Basin significance	First hydro project in the Lohit River Basin

THE LOHIT RIVER — GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The **Lohit River** is a major tributary of the Brahmaputra (Assam calls it the Lohit) and one of three main rivers that join to form the Brahmaputra in Assam.

Key Facts — Lohit River

- Origin: **Zayul Chu** (Tibetan name) — rises in eastern Tibet
- Enters India through the Kibithoo area of **Anjaw District**, Arunachal Pradesh
- Flows through Arunachal Pradesh before joining the Brahmaputra at **Sadiya** (Assam)
- Length in India: ~200 km
- Drainage basin: Shares watershed with Dibang and Siang rivers
- The **Lohit River Basin** has remained largely untapped for hydropower — Kalai-II is the first project approved in this basin

Anjaw District

- Easternmost district of Arunachal Pradesh (and of India)
- Borders: China (northeast), Myanmar (east), Nagaland (south)
- District headquarters: **Hayuliang**
- Strategic significance: Border district with China's Yunnan Province

IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

THDC India Limited

- Full name: **THDC India Limited** (formerly Tehri Hydro Development Corporation India Ltd)
- Ownership: NTPC holds **74.5% stake** (making it an NTPC subsidiary)
- Government of India holds the remainder through Ministry of Power
- Primary **mandate**: Development of hydro and other renewable projects
- Major existing project: **Tehri Hydro Power Complex** (Uttarakhand) — 2,400 MW

Joint Venture Structure

- THDC India Limited + **Government of Arunachal Pradesh** — JV for Kalai-II
- This follows the established model for hydro projects in Arunachal Pradesh: PSU + State government JV
- State equity participation ensures Arunachal Pradesh receives royalties and employment benefits

RUN-OF-RIVER TECHNOLOGY — UPSC CONTEXT

A **run-of-river (RoR)** hydroelectric project uses the natural flow of a river without creating a large storage reservoir. This has significant implications:

FEATURE	RUN-OF-RIVER	STORAGE DAM
Water storage	Minimal – diversion weir only	Large reservoir
Environmental impact	Lower displacement, lower submergence	High submergence, displacement
Power generation	Seasonal variation (depends on river flow)	Can regulate output year-round
Construction time	Generally faster	Slower
Example	Kalai-II, Subansiri Lower	Bhakra-Nangal, Tehri

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

- **Direct employment:** Approximately **1,700 jobs** during construction and operation
- **Reservation policy:** 50% of jobs reserved for **project-affected families (PAFs)** – a standard NHPC/hydro project policy
- **Local procurement:** Preference for materials sourced from Arunachal Pradesh

INDIA'S HYDROPOWER AMBITIONS — POLICY CONTEXT

National Hydropower Target

India has set a target of **500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030**. Hydro is classified as **renewable energy** (after the Electricity (Amendment) Act notifications) and counts toward this target.

HYDRO POLICY DEVELOPMENT	DETAILS
Large hydro → Renewable (2019)	Ministry of New & Renewable Energy classified large hydro (>25 MW) as RE – eligible for RPO targets
Hydro Purchase Obligation (HPO)	States must purchase a minimum % of power from hydro sources
₹12,000 crore incentive	Central financial assistance for hydro projects >25 MW above a cost threshold

Arunachal Pradesh Hydro Potential

- Arunachal Pradesh has a **theoretical hydro potential of ~50,000 MW** – one of the highest in India
- Only a fraction (~3,000 MW) is currently developed
- Key rivers: Brahmaputra (Siang), Subansiri, Kameng, Lohit, Dibang

- **Strategic dimension:** Developing hydro capacity in Arunachal Pradesh also signals Indian infrastructure presence in a border state disputed by China

UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS3 — Economy	Hydropower policy; renewable energy targets; PSU-state JV model
GS3 — Environment	Run-of-river vs storage dam; river basin ecology
GS1 — Geography	Lohit River basin; Anjaw District; Brahmaputra tributaries
GS2 — Governance	CCEA; Centre-state infrastructure partnership
Prelims	Lohit River origin; Anjaw District; THDC India Limited ownership; annual generation figure

Cost: ₹14,105.83 crore | Capacity: **1,200 MW** (6×190 MW + 1×60 MW) | Annual generation: **4,852.95 MU** | River: **Lohit River** | District: **Anjaw, Arunachal Pradesh** | Approved by: **CCEA** | Implementing JV: **THDC India Limited** (NTPC subsidiary, 74.5% stake) + Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh | Basin first: **First project in Lohit Basin** | Type: Run-of-River | Jobs: ~1,700; 50% reserved for PAFs | Lohit River: originates in Tibet; joins Brahmaputra at Sadiya | THDC major project: Tehri Hydro (2,400 MW, Uttarakhand) | GS3: Economy, Environment; GS1: Geography

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