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Kishau Multi-Purpose Dam: Six States End an Eight-Year Deadlock

17 June 2026

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WHY IN NEWS

On June 16, 2026, six states agreed, in a meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, to construct the long-pending Kishau Multi-Purpose Dam, ending an eight-year deadlock over cost sharing in the Yamuna basin.

The Kishau project has been on the drawing board for decades, but inter-state disagreement over sharing the cost of its irrigation and power components stalled it for eight years. The breakthrough is a textbook example of cooperative federalism (<https://ujjyari.com/terms/cooperative-federalism/>) applied to inter-state river management, an area where India's record is uneven.

WHAT IS THE KISHAU DAM?

The Kishau Multi-Purpose Dam is a major project on the **Tons River**, the largest tributary of the Yamuna. The Tons rises in the Himalaya and joins the Yamuna in the lower hills, carrying a large volume of water.

PARAMETER	DETAIL
River	Tons (largest tributary of the Yamuna)
Estimated cost	About ₹15,000 crore
Dam type	Concrete gravity dam
Height	236 metres
Installed power capacity	660 MW
Irrigation potential	About 97,000 hectares
Drinking water	517 MCM
Live storage	1,324 MCM
Beneficiary states	Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Delhi

At 236 metres, the dam would be among the tallest in India. Its multi-purpose design combines hydropower, irrigation, drinking water supply and flood moderation.

The Six Beneficiary States

The project benefits six states and union territories of the Yamuna basin: Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana and Delhi. The dam itself straddles the Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand border region along the Tons.

THE DEADLOCK AND THE BREAKTHROUGH

The dispute centred on how the six states would share the cost of the water (irrigation and drinking) component. The breakthrough formula has the **Centre funding 90% of the cost of the water component**, with the power component to be developed separately. This substantially lowers the financial burden on the states, which had been the sticking point.

The next step is approval by the **Union Cabinet**, after which detailed implementation can begin.

GEOGRAPHY OF THE YAMUNA BASIN

The Yamuna and the Tons

The Yamuna is the largest tributary of the Ganga, rising from the Yamunotri glacier in Uttarakhand. The Tons, despite being a tributary, often carries more water than the Yamuna at their **confluence** (<https://ujijari.com/vocab/confluence/>), making it hydrologically critical for the basin's water balance.

Why Storage Matters

Northern India faces sharp seasonal variation, with most flow concentrated in the monsoon. Large live storage of 1,324 MCM allows water to be captured during the monsoon and released for irrigation, drinking and power through the dry season, while also moderating floods downstream.

THE FEDERALISM DIMENSION

Inter-state river water disputes are among the most **contentious** (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/contentious/>) issues in Indian federalism, governed by Article 262 of the Constitution and the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956. Many disputes, such as Cauvery and Krishna, have taken decades. The Kishau agreement shows that proactive central facilitation and a generous cost-sharing formula can break logjams without prolonged litigation.

UPSC RELEVANCE

The topic spans three GS papers.

- **GS1 Geography:** Drainage systems, the Yamuna and its tributaries, Himalayan rivers and dam geography.
- **GS2 Polity and Governance:** Cooperative **federalism** (<https://ujivari.com/terms/federalism/>), inter-state river water disputes, Article 262 and the role of the Centre.
- **GS3 Economy and Environment:** Hydropower, irrigation infrastructure, water security and the environmental trade-offs of large dams in the Himalaya.
- **Mains angle:** Aspirants should weigh the benefits (water and **energy security** (<https://ujivari.com/terms/energy-security/>)) against concerns over seismic risk in the Himalaya, submergence, displacement and downstream ecology.

Way Forward

Implementation must integrate robust environmental and social impact assessment, seismic safety in a fragile Himalayan zone, fair **rehabilitation** (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/rehabilitation/>) of displaced communities and basin-wide water accounting so that downstream needs are protected.

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River: Tons, the largest tributary of the Yamuna.

Dam: 236-metre concrete gravity dam; 660 MW; about 97,000 hectares irrigation; 517 MCM drinking water; live storage 1,324 MCM.

Cost: About ₹15,000 crore; Centre funds 90% of the water-component cost.

Six states: Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Delhi.

Constitutional provisions: Article 262 and the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 govern river disputes.

Next step: Union Cabinet approval.

Sources: *Press Information Bureau* (<https://pib.gov.in>), *Indian Express* (<https://indianexpress.com>)

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