Sardar Sarovar Dam Project

1) Introduction
   - Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River.
   - A multi-purpose project with irrigation, power and drinking water benefits, it is meant to benefit Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat.
   - It would become a symbol of the country’s growing prowess and boost growth in the region.

2) Background
   - The Sardar Sarovar project was a vision of the first deputy prime minister of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
   - The foundation stone of the project was laid out by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on April 5, 1961.
   - The project took form in 1979 as part of a development scheme to increase irrigation and produce hydroelectricity.
   - In 1996, the Supreme Court stayed the project, further delaying the work on the dam.
   - After the Supreme Court gave an order in October 2000 in favour of construction of the dam, the work resumed.

3) Benefits
   - It will provide drinking water to 4 crore people and help irrigate 2.2 million hectares of land.
   - The irrigation benefits will help in doubling the farmers income by 2022.
   - The Narmada canal will also irrigate lands in the desert districts of Barmer and Jalore of Rajasthan.
   - Project has successfully brought water to the dry Kutch district, where the armed forces are guarding the nation.
   - Drop-out ratio of girls from schools reduced after Narmada waters started reaching homes of the people.
   - Providing drinking water to animals and livestock
   - Provide domestic and industrial water, generate employment, and provide valuable peak electric power.
   - Provide flood protection to riverine reaches
   - Wild life sanctuaries viz. "Shoolpaneshewar wild life sanctuary", Wild Ass Sanctuary, Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary, Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary and many others will be benefited.
   - Benefits of fisheries development and recreational facilities
   - It is an engineering marvel that has become a case study for large projects across the world.

4) Hurdles faced
   - The World Bank which had earlier agreed to fund the project, refused to give loan for it raising environmental concerns.
   - Dispute between Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh on the sharing of the water and electricity.
   - The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), led by activist Medha Patkar, an anti-dam agitation took the matter to the Supreme Court over environmental concerns.
   - Inter-state disputes, land acquisition and environmental problems and the rehabilitation and resettlement of those displaced by the project.
5) **Criticism**

- Negative impact it would have on the local tribals in the region.
- Thousands of families along the Narmada River in Madhya Pradesh are at risk of getting displaced with the closing of gates of Sardar Sarovar Dam and resultant rise in the water level in its catchment area.
- The Narmada Bachao Andolan group claims that 40,000 families in 192 villages in Madhya Pradesh would be displaced when the reservoir is filled to its optimum capacity.
- Large dams have forced the displacement of millions of India’s small farmers and landless peasants from across the country, forcing them into urban slums and breaking apart families.
- Downstream habitat change and impacting biodiversity.
- The Narmada estuary has become increasingly saline because of the decrease in fresh water flow.
- Siltation is one of the biggest challenges faced by dams worldwide, and giant dams such as the Sardar Sarovar cannot be easily desilted.

6) **Key Facts**

- The dam is expected to provide water and power to millions of people in four states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan.
- The storage capacity has increased 3.75 times to 4.73 million acre-feet.
- The dam stands at 138 metres height.
- The project is being executed by the Gujarat government’s Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd (SSNL).
- The Sardar Sarovar project is the biggest dam in terms of volume of concrete used in it.
- It is the second biggest dam after the Grand Coulee Dam in the United States.
- Narmada is India’s largest west-flowing river.