Geography · GS - I

"Water resources are both an asset and a source of conflict in South Asia." Examine this statement giving examples.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2026	GS - I	Geography

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Transboundary rivers, irrigation, hydropower, agriculture, drinking water, India-Pakistan, India-Bangladesh, India-Nepal, India-Bhutan, water scarcity, climate change, river-water treaties, cooperation and conflict

Model Answer

Water is a vital economic and ecological asset in South Asia, but its transboundary nature also makes it a source of geopolitical tensions. Major rivers such as the Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra sustain agriculture, hydropower, fisheries and drinking-water needs across national boundaries.

However, competing demands and unequal geographical distribution create conflicts. The Indus water system has remained an important dimension of India-Pakistan relations despite the Indus Waters Treaty. India-Bangladesh disagreements over the Teesta and sharing of Ganga waters illustrate tensions arising from downstream dependence. Similarly, hydropower projects on Himalayan rivers have generated concerns among downstream countries, particularly Nepal and Bangladesh.

Rapid population growth, urbanisation, agricultural expansion and climate change are increasing pressure on regional water resources. Glacier retreat and changing monsoon patterns may further complicate water availability.

Nevertheless, water can also become an instrument of regional cooperation through joint river management, data sharing, hydropower partnerships and treaty mechanisms.

Thus, sustainable and equitable transboundary water governance is essential for converting South Asia's shared water resources from a source of conflict into an asset for regional development.

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