
जल शक्ति मंत्रालय
जल संसाधन, नदी विकास और गंगा संरक्षण विभाग
MINISTRY OF JAL SHAKTI
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES,
RIVER DEVELOPMENT & GANGA REJUVENATION
INDIA WATER WEEK 2026
WATER FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW
PEOPLE | PARTNERSHIPS | PROGRESS
SHARED WATERS STRONGER INDIA
A Critical Review of
Inter-State Water Dispute Tribunals
Ashis Banerjee
Chief Engineer, Central Water Commission
WATER SECURITY
SHARED PROSPERITY
INCLUSIVE GROWTH
A RESILIENT TOMORROW

Constitutional Basis for Inter-State Water Disputes

Article 246: Distribution of Legislative Powers

Union List, Entry 56

- Regulation and development of inter-State rivers and river valleys
- To the extent declared by Parliament to be expedient in the public interest

State List, Entry 17

- Water supplies, irrigation and canals
- Drainage and embankments
- Water storage and water power
- Subject to Entry 56 of the Union List

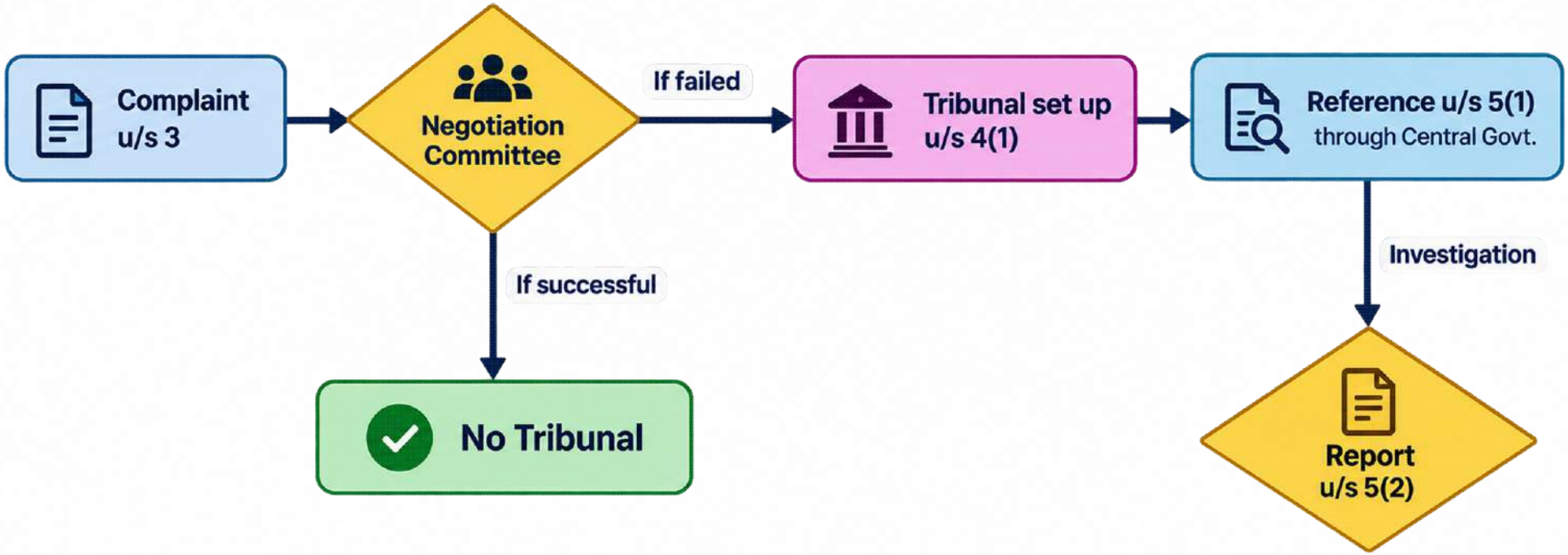
Article 262: Disputes relating to Waters

- Parliament may provide for adjudication of disputes relating to the use, distribution or control of waters of inter-State rivers or river valleys.
- Parliament may also provide for exclusion of the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and other courts in such disputes.

Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956

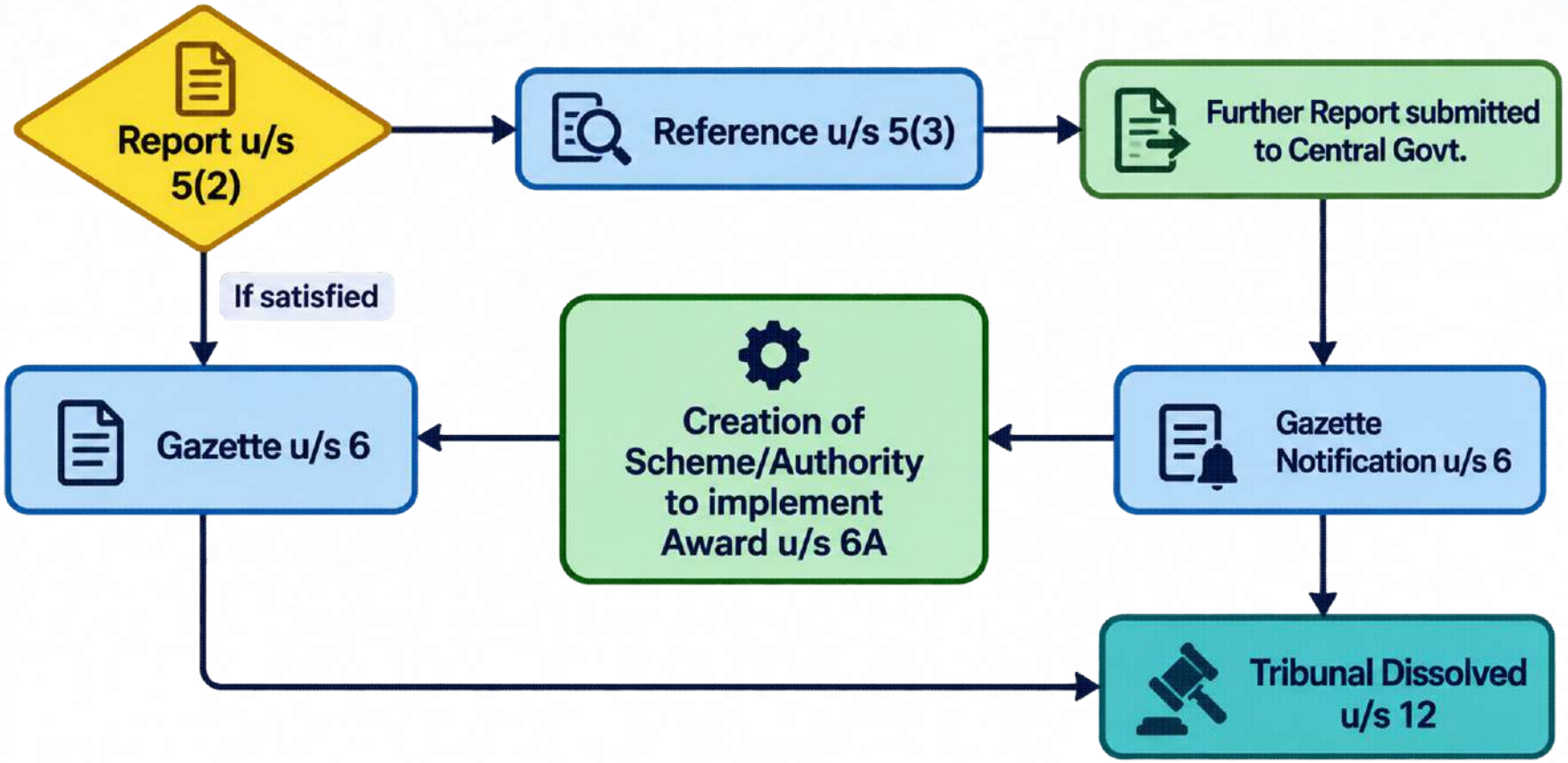
Broad framework under the statutory mechanism enacted pursuant to Article 262.

The **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956** was enacted under Article 262 to provide a statutory mechanism for adjudication of disputes relating to waters of inter-State rivers and river valleys



Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956

Broad framework under the statutory mechanism enacted pursuant to Article 262.



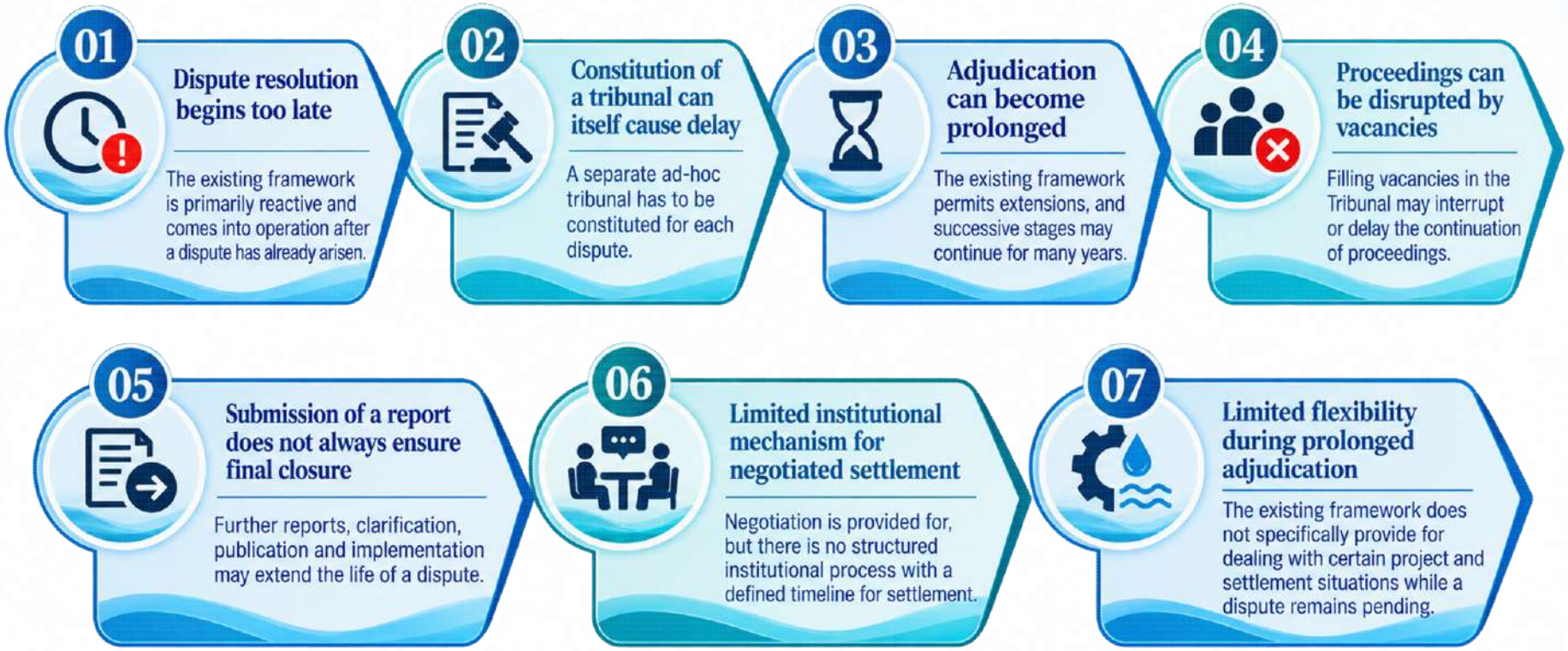
Water Tribunals: Experience of the System

A consolidated view of constitution, reporting milestones and present status.

TRIBUNAL	CONSTITUTION	REPORT u/s 5(2)	REPORT u/s 5(3)	PRESENT STATUS
Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal (GWDT)	Apr. 1969	Nov. 1979	Jul. 1980	Final Award notified; dissolved
Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-I (KWDT-I)	Apr. 1969	Dec. 1973	May 1976	Final Award notified; dissolved
Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal (NWDT)	Oct. 1969	Aug. 1978	Dec. 1979	Final Award notified; dissolved
Ravi-Beas Water Tribunal (RBWT)	02 Apr. 1986	30 Jan. 1987	Pending	Pending further report/decision; matter sub-judice
Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT)	02 Jun. 1990	Feb, 2007	—	Award published in 2013 and subsequently merged with SC judgment dated 16.02.2018; dissolved
Krishna Water Dispute Tribunal-II (KWDT-II)	02 Apr. 2004	30 Dec. 2010	29 Nov. 2013	Award not published; further proceedings ongoing
Mahadayi Water Dispute Tribunal	16 Nov. 2010	14 Aug. 2018	—	Further references pending; matter sub-judice
Vansadhara Water Disputes Tribunal (VWDT)	24 Feb. 2010	13 Sep. 2017	21 Jun. 2021	Final Award notified on 30 Mar. 2026; dissolved
Mahanadi Water Dispute Tribunal	12 Mar. 2018	Pending		References under adjudication; matter sub-judice

What Does the Tribunal Experience Reveal?

Seven recurring issues identified from the tribunal experience.



The experience indicates that the challenge lies not only in adjudication, but in achieving **timely, continoous and effective resolution.**

Scope for Improvement: Before Adjudication

Prevent disputes from becoming prolonged litigation.

Strengthen dispute prevention

Potential areas of inter-State conflict should be identified and addressed before they develop into formal disputes.

Improve project appraisal and inter-State consultation

Potential impacts on basin States should be examined at the project appraisal stage.

Ensure timely sharing of reliable data

States should have access to relevant and agreed information on water availability, utilisation, storage and other parameters.

Institutionalise structured negotiation

Negotiation should have a defined institutional mechanism, clear stages and a specified timeframe.

Provide an early settlement pathway

Disputes that can be resolved through negotiation should not unnecessarily proceed to full adjudication.

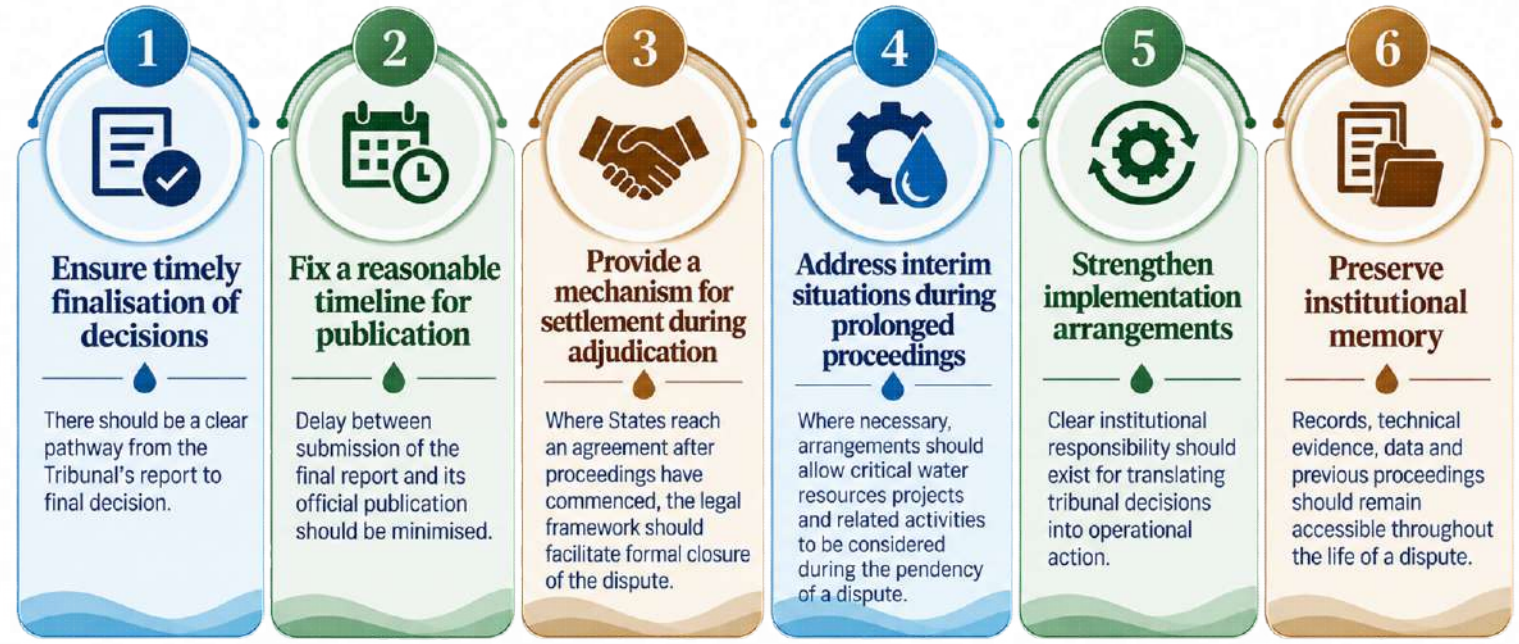
Scope for Improvement: Functioning of Tribunals

Make adjudication more efficient, continuous and technically sound.



Scope for Improvement: From Adjudication to Final Resolution

A tribunal decision should lead to closure and implementation



Concluding Perspective

Lessons from the Tribunal Experience

The tribunal mechanism has provided a formal means for adjudicating major inter-State water disputes. However, experience shows that the effectiveness of dispute resolution depends on more than adjudication alone.

A more effective system requires:

01 Prevention and early engagement

Address emerging issues through dialogue, data sharing and cooperative arrangements.

02 Structured negotiation

Provide an institutional framework for sustained and time-bound negotiations.

03 Efficient and continuous adjudication

Ensure time-bound, uninterrupted and transparent adjudication processes.

04 Finality of decision

Ensure a clear pathway from the tribunal's report to a final and published decision.

05 Effective implementation

Establish clear institutional responsibility for translating decisions into operational action.

The ultimate objective should be timely and sustainable resolution of inter-State water disputes.


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Thank You