

Dam Safety bill

December 6, 2021

In news– Recently, the Parliament has passed the landmark Dam Safety Bill (2019), paving the way for enactment of the Dam Safety Act in the country.

Key provision of the bill-

- The Bill provides for adequate surveillance, inspection, operation, and maintenance of all the large dams in the country so as to prevent dam failure related disasters.
- The Bill covers those **dams having the height of over 15 metres and between 10 and 15 metres with certain stipulations.**
- As per the provision of the Bill, **a National Committee on Dam Safety (NCDS)** will be constituted to help evolve uniform dam safety policies, protocols, and procedures.
- It also provides for the **establishment of a National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA)** as a regulatory body for ensuring the nationwide implementation of dam safety policies and standards.
- **At the State level,** the Bill prescribes for the constitution of **State Committees on Dam Safety (SCDS) and the establishment of the State Dam Safety Organizations (SDSO).**
- It also addresses in a comprehensive manner, critical concerns related to dam safety on account of emerging climate change related challenges.
- It provides for **regular inspection and hazard classification of dams.**
- It also provides for drawing up of **emergency action plans and comprehensive dam safety reviews** by an independent panel of experts.
- There is provision for an **emergency flood warning system** to address the safety concerns of downstream inhabitants.

- Through this Bill the **Dam owners are required to provide resources for timely repair and maintenance of the dam structure, along with related machinery.**
- This Bill **has penal provisions**, involving offences and penalties, for ensuring compliance of the provisions.
- The definite **timelines have been provided in the Bill for the establishment of a robust institutional framework**, with the support of both the Centre and the States.

Key facts-

- After China and USA, **India is the 3rd largest dam-owning nation** in the world.
- There are around 5,700 large dams in the country, of which about 80% are already over 25 years old.
- **Nearly 227 dams that are over 100 years old are still functional.**
- Although India's track record of dam safety is at par with that of the developed nations, there have been instances of unwarranted dam failures and of poor maintenance issues.
- According to the National Register of Large Dams prepared in June 2019 by the Central Dam Safety Organisation (CDSO) in the Central Water Commission (CWC), 67 dams were built prior to the 20th century and 1,039 dams during the first 70 years of the 20th century.

Extra

reading:

<https://journalsofindia.com/national-committee-on-dam-safety/>