

Mullaperiyar Dam

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In News: The Supreme Court recently said that 'immediate attention' is required to be given to the safety of the Mullaperiyar Dam and the supervisory committee need to be strengthened to take steps that are required to be taken by the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) under the Dam Safety Act 2021. It said that the supervisory committee will issue directions that will be complied with by both the states.

About Mullaperiyar Dam

- Dam is a masonry gravity dam on the Periyar River in the Indian state of Kerala.
- It is located 881 m above mean sea level, on the **Cardamom Hills of the Western Ghats** in Thekkady, Idukki District of Kerala.
- It was **constructed between 1887 and 1895 by John Pennycuick** and also reached an agreement to divert water eastwards to the Madras Presidency area (present-day Tamil Nadu).
- The Periyar National Park in Thekkady is located around the dam's reservoir.
- **The dam is built at the confluence of Mullayar and Periyar rivers and is operated and maintained by the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu.**
- Although the Periyar River has a total catchment area of 5398 km² with 114 km² downstream from the dam in Tamil Nadu, **the catchment area of the Mullaperiyar Dam itself lies entirely in Kerala and thus not an inter-State river.**

What is the issue?

- Lease agreement was renewed in the 1970s by both Tamil Nadu and Kerala-
 - Giving the former rights to the land and water

from the dam by Kerala.

- Authority to develop hydropower projects at the site.
- Kerala would receive rent from Tamil Nadu.
- The first cracks in this agreement surfaced in 1979 when a minor earthquake had resulted in cracks in the dam.
- The **Central Water Commission recommended lowering the water stored in the dam's reservoir to 136 feet from 142 feet.**
- If definitive measures were implemented, only then could the Tamil Nadu administration raise water levels to the dam's full capacity of 152 feet.



Supreme Court judgements-

- In 2006, the Supreme court gave Tamil Nadu legal sanction to raise the water level to 142 feet.
- In 2006, Kerala amended the 2003 Kerala Irrigation and Water Conservation Act, restricting the water level to 136 feet.

- In 2012, however, an Apex court-appointed committee stated that the dam was “structurally and hydrologically safe” and that the Tamil Nadu government could raise water levels up to 142 feet.
- In 2014, the court event struck down the amendment to the 2003 Kerala Irrigation and Water Conservation Act, calling it unconstitutional.
- The Supreme Court had also directed the Centre and the governments of Kerala and Tamil Nadu to set up three panels to prepare a contingency plan in case of a disaster.
- In direction of SC, in 2018, Dam Supervisory Committee headed by A M Khanwilkar was formed.