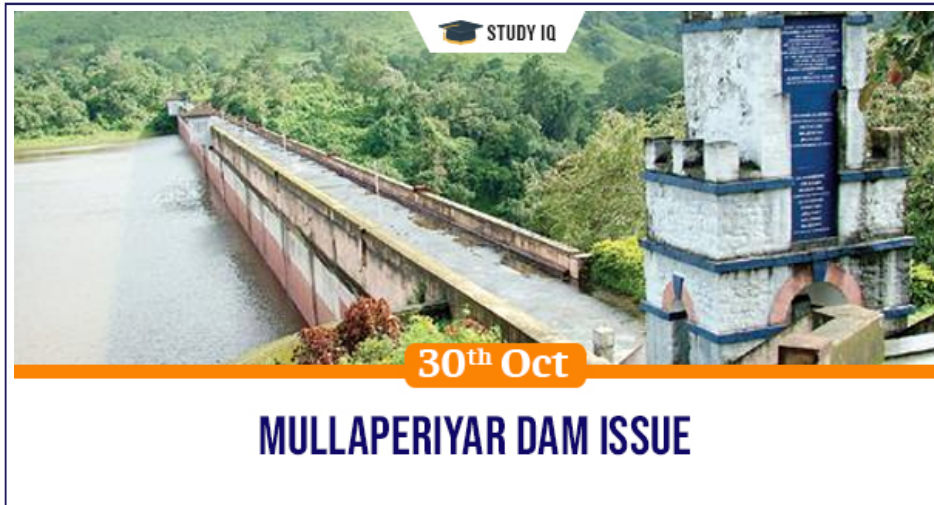


MULLAPERIYAR DAM ISSUE



Issue

The Supreme Court has directed that the maximum level of the Mullaperiyar dam should be 139.50 ft until November 10.

Background

The Mullaperiyar dam is located in Kerala but controlled by Tamil Nadu. This is the reason for conflict between the states.

Details

- The dam is a lifeline for the five districts of Tamil Nadu. However, it poses threat to large number of people living downstream.
- The dam is constructed on the Periyar River, near the border with Tamil Nadu. The dam is located within the Periyar Tiger Reserve.
- The diverted water from the reservoir is first used for power generation in lower Periyar before flowing into the Suruliyar, a tributary of Vaigai river.
- The Vaigai river water is then used for irrigating nearly 2.08 lakh hectares in Theni and four other districts farther away.

The current issue

- The Supreme Court in 2014 had mandated that maximum height of water should be 142 ft. The Kerala government is not allowing it to go beyond 139ft.
- The sudden rainfall has increased the water inflow. The Kerala government is not ready to allow additional storage as it would affect downstream projects.

- It has cited a report which said that one of the main reasons for 2018 floods was sudden release of waters from Mullaperiyar dam.

What next?

Kerala has demanded that a new dam be constructed downstream as the existing one is old. It would however need assent of Tamil Nadu.

The Mullaperiyar history

- The dam was constructed in 1895 after a treaty was signed between the Maharaja of Travancore and government of Madras.
- The water of the river was considered more important for development of agriculture in the arid region in Tamil Nadu.
- There has been a report that dam is unfit to operate and a study had recommended that the level be reduced to 152 ft from 155 ft.

Legal battle

- Petitions have been filed in courts both in support and opposition of the dam. The Supreme Court had formed an expert panel to study the strength of the dam.
- The Kerala assembly passed the Kerala Irrigation and Water Conservation Act, 2003, to bring Mullaperiyar in the schedule of 'Endangered Dams' and restricting its storage at 136 ft.

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