



## Mullaperiyar Dam

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### Why in News

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Recently, the **Supreme Court (SC)** has ordered the **Mullaperiyar Dam Supervisory Committee** to issue directions on issues concerning the **dam's safety**.

The SC constituted a **permanent Supervisory Committee** in **2014** to **oversee all the issues concerning Mullaperiyar dam**. The dam is **a source of friction between Tamil Nadu and Kerala**.

### Key Points

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- **Background:**
  - A **petition** was filed by a resident of Idukki district of Kerala to **lower the water level of Mullaperiyar dam to 130 feet** saying there is a **danger of earthquakes and floods** in the area as monsoon progresses in the State.
  - The petitioner contended that the **Supervisory Committee had become “lethargical”** about the safety inspection and survey of the dam.
    - It had **delegated its duties to a sub-committee of local officials**.
    - The instrumentation scheme, safety mechanism, etc, have not been finalised for the past six years.

- **Tamil Nadu's Stand:**

- Blamed Kerala for delaying the finalisation of the **rule curve** for the dam.
  - **Rule curve** in a dam decides the fluctuating storage levels in a reservoir. The gate opening schedule of a dam is based on the rule curve.
  - It is **part of the “core safety”** mechanism in a dam.
  - The **rule curve level is fixed to avoid emergency opening of dam shutters** in case of a flood-like situation. It helps in controlling the water level in the dam during peak monsoon.
- Kerala has made consistent efforts to obstruct Tamil Nadu from operating the dam.
- Tamil Nadu is **not able to access data** which is in Kerala's terrain. There is **no road built**, the **power supply has not been restored** although Tamil Nadu has paid for it.

- **Kerala's Stand:**

Accused Tamil Nadu of adopting an **“obsolete”** gate operation schedule dating back to 1939.

- **SC's Ruling:**

- **Tamil Nadu's Chief Secretary** shall be **“personally responsible”** and **“appropriate action”** will be taken on failure to give information on the **rule curve for Mullaperiyar dam** to the SC -appointed **Supervisory Committee**.
- Directed the Supervisory Committee to **issue directions or take steps to address the three core safety issues** and submit a compliance report in four weeks.
  - **Core Issues:**
    - Monitoring and performance of the **instrumentation** of the dam.
    - Finalising the **rule curve**.
    - Fixing the gate **operating schedule**.
  - **Reason:**

The three core issues are **directly concerned with the safety of the dam** and will have a cascading effect on persons residing in the nearby areas.

## **Mullaperiyar Dam**

- The Mullaperiyar, a **123-year-old** dam, is **located on the confluence of the Mullayar and Periyar rivers** in Kerala's Idukki district.

The dam stands at the **height of 53.66 metres** and **365.85 metres in length**.
- It is **operated and maintained by the Tamil Nadu** for meeting the drinking water and irrigation requirements of five of its southern districts.

According to a 999-year **lease agreement** made during the British rule the operational rights were handed over to Tamil Nadu.

- The **dam intends to divert the waters of the west-flowing river Periyar eastward** to the arid rain shadow regions of the Tamil Nadu.

## Periyar River

- The **Periyar River is the longest river in the state of Kerala** with a length of 244 km.
- It is also known as '**Lifeline of Kerala**' as it is one of the few perennial rivers in the state.

A **perennial river is a channel that has continuous flow** in parts of its stream bed all year round.

- Periyar River **originates from Sivagiri hills of Western Ghats** and flows through the **Periyar National Park**.
- The **main tributaries** of Periyar are Muthirapuzha, Mullayar, Cheruthoni, Perinjankutti.



**Source: TH**