



Current Affairs of the Day

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Weak earthen embankments cause Assam's sorrow

- Ill-maintained or poorly constructed river embankments have added to Assam's flood woes this year.
- The daily flood summary provided by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) is a profusion of numbers.



- Some 5.35 million people of 5,004 villages and localities across 30 of Assam's 33 districts have been affected and 76 died — five on Friday — in two waves of floods since May 22. Another 26 died in landslips.
- So far, 1,606 roads and 164 bridges or culverts have been damaged.

What is the major reason?

- The column also says 197 earthen embankments have been damaged or breached. This is the major reason Assam suffers every monsoon, water resources experts say.
- One major feature of flood management in Assam is total dependence on embankments. If the approach to a very complicated problem is on a mono strategy that is technically unsound, then you are in great danger and that is what's happening.

Last-moment schemes:

- ASDMA officials admit that the brittle embankments have often compounded flood management plans.
- A factor is the last-moment schemes submitted by the Water Resources Department. Embankments are repaired or constructed from the State Disaster Response Fund, but the schemes for release of money were submitted in May, when the flood season in Assam starts. The quality of work suffers obviously.



- Water Resources officials blamed the delay on COVID-19 and the associated lockdown.
- Assam began constructing embankments in the 1960s and most of them have outlived their utility. Many of these started breaching or collapsing from the 1990s, more seriously from the 2000s.

Human trials for Covaxin begin

- Three volunteers were administered Covaxin, India's first indigenous COVID-19 vaccine, at the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS) in Rohtak on Friday as part of the first phase of human trials.
- The vaccine, developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech in collaboration with Indian Council of Medical Research and National Institute of Virology, didn't induce any initial adverse effects, said doctors involved in the process.

At UN meet, Modi calls for 'reformed multilateralism'

- Calling on members of the United Nations to pledge for reform within the world body, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the multilateral system needed to be more representative, and India believed that "the path to achieve sustainable peace and prosperity" was through multilateralism.
- He was speaking at a high-level dialogue of the UN's **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** on "**Multilateralism after COVID-19: What kind of UN do we need at the 75th anniversary?**"

\$300 bn package:

- He also detailed economic measures to manage the impact of the pandemic, including a government package of \$300 billion to "bring the economy back on track, build modern infrastructure and put in place a technology-driven system".



'Draft EIA gives licence for violations'

- The **Draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) 2020** is in keeping with the pro-business agenda of the Narendra Modi government and gives "license for wrongdoing and violations," CPI(M) Polit Bureau member Brinda Karat said in a letter to Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar.
- The Draft EIA 2020, Ms. Karat says, is contrary to its statutory requirement to "protect and improve the environment," instead it is designed to dilute existing protections through different means. She further alleged that the draft not only supersedes the EIA 2006 but also seeks to circumvent various rulings made by the National Green Tribunal and the Supreme Court.
- The most objectionable aspect of the draft is completely ignoring the concerns of Adviasis, who are going to be the most affected community due to the dilution of environment regulations, said Ms. Karat

Value Added Information

Draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) 2020

The key points of dispute with the proposed draft are that:

- It shortens the period of public consultation hearings to a maximum of 40 days.
- It reduces from 30 to 20 days the time provided for the public to submit their responses during a public hearing for any application seeking environmental clearance.
- It also allows the declaration of some areas as "economically sensitive areas" without a public hearing or environmental clearance, and several "red" and "orange"-classified toxic industries could now operate as close as 0-5 km from a Protected Area in "callous disregard" for forests.
- The increased validity of the environment clearances for mining projects (50 years versus 30 years currently) and river valley projects (15 years versus 10 years currently) raises the risk of irreversible environmental, social and health consequences on account of the project remaining unnoticed for long.



What is EIA?

- EIA is an important process for evaluating the likely environmental impact of a proposed project. It is a process whereby people's views are taken into consideration for granting final approval to any developmental project or activity. It is basically, a decision-making tool to decide whether the project should be approved or not.
- The EIA process involves:
 - Screening: this stage decides which projects need a full or partial assessment study.
 - Scoping: this stage decides which impacts are necessary to be assessed. This is done based on legal requirements, international conventions, expert knowledge and public engagement. This stage also finds out alternate solutions.
 - Assessment & evaluation of impacts and development of alternatives: this stage predicts and identifies the environmental impacts of the proposed project and also elaborates on the alternatives.
 - EIA Report: in this reporting stage, an environmental management plan (EMP) and also a non-technical summary of the project's impact is prepared for the general public. This report is also called the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
 - Decision making: the decision on whether the project is to be given approval or not and if it is to be given, under what conditions.
 - Monitoring, compliance, enforcement and environmental auditing: monitoring whether the predicted impacts and the mitigation efforts happen as per the EMP.

UAE Mars probe's launch rescheduled

- A Japanese rocket carrying the first Arab mission to Mars will blast into space on Monday, after being delayed by bad weather.

The lift-off of the UAE's 'hope' probe, originally planned for Wednesday, is now set for 6.58 a.m. on Monday from Tanegashima Space Centre in southern Japan, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries said.